A PRACTICAL FAITH

HAROLD ANSON

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BY

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WITH A PREFACE BY

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To

H. R. L. S.

EXIGUUM

MAGNI

PIGNUS

AMORIS

PREFACE

MANY who have transferred their allegiance from Christianity to some other religion—and in these days there are a goodly crop to choose from—may understand the new faith they have embraced, but it is questionable whether they have ever understood the old faith that they have discarded.

Christianity would appear to be the most misunderstood religion in the world, and one may be permitted to wonder whether this is not largely due to the singular inadequacy of much of the literature that is supposed to explain and commend it. Jesus Christ was and is the Master of the art of living, and the Christian faith is God's answer to the actual needs of ordinary hard-pressed men and women, but it is seldom that these two paramount facts are passionately stated or intellectually explained.

From the point of view of the average thoughtful person, religious literature is singularly disappointing. More often than not it is written in a language

that is incomprehensible to all who are not familiar with the phraseology of ecclesiastics and theologians. Lazarus at the gate of Dives is no more to be pitied than an ordinary man at the counter of a religious book-shop. There has been great improvement in recent years, but even to-day the man who has developed a passion for Jesus Christ and is hungry for righteousness is unlikely to find much that is satisfying in 75 per cent. of the books which claim to cater for his spiritual hunger.

Theologians are very disappointing people. They have much to contribute, and yet they will not take the trouble to make themselves understood. Even when they set forth their knowledge of spiritual truth, it is so encumbered with words that are unfamiliar, except to those who have had the advantage, or disadvantage, of a theological upbringing, that ordinary people cannot really understand what they are writing about. Nothing is more needed than a greater setting for Jesus Christ—a fresher wording for the old truths and an explanation of Christianity which, while it should abate nothing of its demand for sacrifice, should yet reveal it as a living and vital faith which men need not always defend since its purpose is to defend them.

It is of inestimable service to add one more book to the slender list of those that rescue Christianity from pettiness and ecclesiasticism, and give its appeal the primary place as the greatest and most practical thing in the world. This book is an attempt to show how a man may embrace Christianity without doing violence either to his conscience or his intellect. Such work is of all the greater service in days like these when probably, as never before, people are thinking about religion and spiritual things, and yet thinking in a singularly uninstructed and unintelligent way.

It is said that these are days of religious crisis, and most mercifully that is true. The days when there was no religious crisis were spiritually dead. To the crisis that exists a man may contribute a vast deal if fearlessly and honestly he can look into the dark and see through it to where Jesus Christ reigns as the Master of the art of actual living and the Light of the World.

I would that when I was younger such a book as this had been put into my hands. It would not have saved me from doubt, but it would have rescued me from some years of believing that Christianity had better not be closely investigated lest it should prove to be a delusion.

He who seeks a religion that is doubt-proof is

seeking what he will never find, but he who seeks in Jesus Christ sufficient light to walk by and, more than that, a reasonable and practical science of life, will never, I think, be disappointed.

Mr. Anson has made no attempt to explain religion in a form that will suit the whims and fancies of that type of modern persons who want a religion that is easy and agreeable. But he does appear to me to shed light on many difficult places along the road that those who are seeking the living faith must tread.

I am especially honoured at being allowed to write a Preface to this book, since I count the author not only amongst my dearest friends, but as one to whom I owe more than I can ever repay.

H. R. L. S.

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INTRODUCTION

THE object of this little book is to provide for those who cannot read ponderous and very learned treatises a simple introduction to the practice of religion. Christ's teaching has about it the feeling of simplicity and extreme lucidity which impresses us in all great works of art. They are so simple that we say, " That is just what I have always thought, only I could never express it so." " I feel I could have said that thing, or painted that picture, or written that tune myself." It is so easy; so obviously right. And then we try to copy it; and we see how infinitely hard it is; hard, just because it is so wonderfully simple; and yet, though it is so hard a way, we feel " Nothing else is worth while; no other life is worth living." So many people to-day want to find the secret of living manfully and well; we feel that Christ possessed the key to the secret, and could use it at will. Yet we don't feel that He wants us to go back upon all the gains of science; to try to be like Galilean peasants, or to subject ourselves again to those limitations of mind and circumstances from which generations of effort have set us free. We belong to our own generation, and the Christ whom we seek must come to us again with a

gospel for our own time; yet one, we feel, which shall be consonant with the good news which Jesus preached.

The few years in which I have had the great privilege of watching, and sometimes taking a very small part in, the work at St. Martin-in-the-Fields has made me feel that it *is* possible, if only we can be true to what we know, to make the "good news" which Jesus preached good news to the people of to-day, and that not by any return to either elaborate ritual or appeals which can only be understood by learned scholars.

I have seen men and women, without ceasing to be people of our own age and circumstances, made able to live in the same power and strength by which Jesus lived, to eat the spiritual food that He ate, and drink the wine of His kingdom, and be plunged beneath those waters of cleansing and refreshment in which He was baptized, and so become clean; and I have tried here to give a very simple account of the religion which I feel for myself, and in the case of people whose intimate troubles and joys I have been allowed to share, has enabled us to go through with a sense that in some little degree we have overcome the world, and are making some small beginning of understanding what the Kingdom of Heaven is.

A PRACTICAL FAITH

I

WHAT IS RELIGION?

MOST of us have been brought up since childhood in a set of practices and beliefs to which we give the name of "religion." As soon as we began to think at all we found ourselves taking these beliefs for granted, and practising certain ceremonies and observances uncritically and almost automatically. Some of these beliefs and usages were good and beautiful, but many were, now that we look back at them, of very doubtful value. We found ourselves, perhaps, professing belief in a kindly but rather awful Being, who saw us wherever we were, and took special pleasure in noting our misdeeds, who had a special predilection for the Jews, who was alleged to have appeared to certain very remote and half-mythical people, like Abraham and Samuel, and ordered them to do things which we supposed must have been right,

but for which we should have been punished if we had done them ourselves. We probably only half believed these stories, but we were well aware that we must not make light of them at home. These characters and their doings seemed very far from anything we knew in our personal experience, and we wondered why God seemed to have been so much set upon these strange and unpleasant people. Then we were taught about Jesus Christ, and very probably He also seemed a very remote personage, who turned water into wine, and walked on the sea, and cursed a fig-tree, and had no father but only a mother, and rose out of His tomb after He was dead. We were attracted by what little we understood of His teaching, in spite of our being made to learn it by heart ; yet, if we were sufficiently interested to compare it with the practice around us, we soon saw that no one acted upon it literally. We never saw our uncles and aunts giving their coats to beggars, nor giving up their lands and houses for Christ's sake. Still, we saw that Christ was much more attractive than the God of the Jews. We were told, also, that we must ask God to give us whatever we needed, and to that end we were to kneel down and pray every morning and evening. We very quickly found out that we did not get the things we wanted. Our elders got out of that diffi-

culty by telling us that God knew better than we did, and that if we asked for a bicycle and God gave us measles instead, it was just because God saw that measles was really better for us in the end than a bicycle. This, also, we more or less dully accepted as being apparently in the nature of things, and as part of the beliefs of our elders.

Then we were told that God liked us to go to church, and that the church was "God's House." This seemed to us a pity; the church smelt nasty, and never had fresh air; it, alone of all houses, was full of mildewed books with broken backs, the seats and cushions were ugly, the windows were the ugliest we ever knew, and one could not see out of them. Every Sunday we sat there, or knelt in postures of great discomfort, and heard more and more about the Jews, the wars of the Jews, their fierce hatreds and curses and adulteries; St. Paul's long arguments to show that the Jews were all wrong and that we were the real Jews, and why we need not be circumcized or offer bullocks and goats, and then we begged and begged God to have mercy upon us and not to be angry with us for ever, or, if we were brought up in "Catholic" surroundings, we had a dim idea that a gentleman in very wonderful clothes caused Jesus to come into the church with much tinkling of bells and wafting of incense, and

that we ought to be very thankful that this was so, and that He remained about a quarter of an hour, after which He departed, and we might then get up from our uncomfortable positions and go out into the air. About one boy in a hundred, and perhaps sixty or seventy girls in a hundred, enjoyed all this—very few questioned that it was right and necessary. Along with these ceremonial practices went a whole complex of moral inhibitions and taboos. God expected us always to obey our parents, especially on the ground that Jesus obeyed *His* parents and never questioned what they told Him to do (which, of course, we soon found was not true). We were always to be truthful, and kind to animals, and not to over-eat ; to keep up a careful distinction of classes, so as never to be too intimate with those below us in station—it was difficult no doubt to find authority for this in the life of Our Lord, but it was impressed upon us with just as much authority—not to question the opinions of our elders, to be conscious of the great kindness of our parents in bringing us into the world, and of God, who actually " loved a child like me " when He might well have enjoyed the society of grown-up people.

Later on, we learnt the paramount importance of playing games well, as being the chief entrance

into life, and more and more the wickedness of being in any way interested in sex—that dark mystery which loomed up more and more menacing and attractive and inscrutable. We were never told what Jesus thought about this except that He was quite "pure," and expected, undoubtedly, that everyone else would be so without further to-do.

The religion of the home to-day is no doubt in many ways superior to that of a generation ago; not, indeed, that it could be better *in intention* from that of the best homes half a century ago, for no love could have been greater or tenderer than that of the best parents of the last generation, but infinitely wider and more enlightened; and yet even to-day this account of the child's religion is not altogether a caricature of what still is very common in ordinary English homes.

Then there comes a time, perhaps when the child is about sixteen, when he suddenly begins to suspect that all this religion is a "plant," a nursery tale that he is expected to outgrow, and which his parents, secretly and almost without telling themselves, hope that he *will* outgrow. He begins to notice that his father cuts church at the slightest excuse, or that he only goes because it is good for the children; he begins to doubt whether the things we hear about in church ever did happen at all,

and he is not clear that his parents know any more than he knows himself. He notices that, so far from people living by what appears to be the simple meaning of Christ's teaching, all the world is wanting more money, and that money provides the things he most wants himself—not only the obvious things like guns and motor-cars, but even a decent education, and books, and a good home. And the people who are honoured, who have strings of ribbons and medals and titles, are the people who make a profession of killing and being killed, or exploiting successfully the daily necessities of the ordinary citizen. He begins to find, moreover, that he has been deliberately hookwinked over the whole sexual question, which becomes ever more urgent and enthralling. He discovers that it, almost alone, makes newspapers pay ; that it is being universally talked about ; that it is the one serious part of the business of life for which no expert knowledge is provided, and religion is mixed up fatally in this general conspiracy of deception, or wilful withholding of knowledge. He begins to see that the simple acceptance of religion is one of those childish things which he is being silently expected and invited to put away. He is not explicitly asked to put it aside, but he sees that, with few exceptions, all good men and the finer

minded women do put it quietly away in the toy-cupboard with the remnant of their childish things.

The young man, having now quietly shed this religion, is not left without any religion at all. He finds himself enmeshed in a national religion of conventions, differing indeed from those of the Church—which he is in the process of abandoning—and much less clearly formulated, but not the less strongly held because its principles are unformulated, and very insistent in their claim to be observed.

Part of this religion of conventions consists, like that of the Pharisees, of rules of eating and drinking, of marrying and giving in marriage, of laws of caste and the behaviour to be observed towards various ranks of men. It is, on the whole, a healthy and clean religion, and it tends to become more human in each succeeding generation. It teaches men and women to behave decently and with kindness to those of the same caste, but outside the caste the obligations are only to be as humane as is consistent with keeping the other caste at arm's length. You may feel it necessary to send your son to Eton, but not at all necessary to see that your sister's children should have what you feel to be necessary for your own. You would feel quite justified if you helped to provide for them something which

for yourself you would feel a second best; and supposing your nearest relation or friend fell out of the caste, which is generally brought about by loss of money, your obligation then only becomes one of helping to maintain them in that lower caste. You are expected to be kind and amiable to the curate, but also to guard your sons against the dangers involved in marrying the curate's daughter, unless, indeed, she has money to enable her to get into the higher caste and shed the curate's surroundings. Certain trades and occupations are considered impossible for those of the higher castes; these would include the trade of Jesus—that of the village carpenter, and of St. Paul—the tentmaker. You must not be a butcher or a baker or a milliner, and the profession of a priest, now that it is so badly paid, is becoming also a dangerous trade; but you may be a wine seller, or a vendor of insurances, or a profiteer in the necessities of life. You are honoured by being a brewer, or a distiller of whisky, and most of all if you are wholly and exclusively a money-lender, or, as we prefer to call it, a man of "private means." You may profess the religion of the English Church, or the Roman Catholic, or "Christian Science," but not that of the Baptists or Wesleyans or Congregationalists. You must not drop your initial "h's" but you may freely

drop your final "g's." You may marry a woman whose parents drank, or were divorced, or who accumulated money by robbery of the poor, but not one whose parents kept a village shop, or cleaned the streets.

This national religion, which most men adopt when they slough the religion of the Church, is, on the whole, in spite of all these very obvious limitations, a very kindly and reasonable one inside the limits within which it functions, and, as we have already said, it tends to grow more kindly and reasonable with the lapse of time. More opportunities are given than ever before to people to break through caste; there is a more general acceptance of kindly judgments on those who have broken caste; the conventional standards of eating and drinking, and marrying, and building houses, show greater approximation to real standards of beauty.

Those who habitually order their lives by these conventional standards are, for the most part, totally unaware that they have a god or a religion at all. They would say that they have given up religion and do not believe in God. Yet, quite unconsciously, they are very diligent indeed in their worship of this god of Convention. Like

the devotees of other religions, they spend much time in seeking to know their god's will. They offer costly sacrifices to him. They offer human sacrifices very often, and, quite literally, like the men of old, offer their sons and their daughters unto devils. They have their seasons and days of observance when they give themselves up entirely to an intensive devotion to their god. They have their calendar of holy days, of men who have been conspicuous for their pre-eminence in this religion of society, and celebrations of national mysteries of religion—Empire Day, Goodwood, the Derby, Alexandra Day. This religion is a very real factor in life.

And yet this religion fails to satisfy. It is not a religion of the spirit; it leaves out of consideration whole areas of human aspiration; it makes men at home in the actual present, but it fails to take any account of the inextinguishable desire for the invisible ideals.

But every religion which aims at making people thoroughly at home in the present is doomed to failure, for the present is always giving place to new conditions, and its form and fashion are always passing away, and, as it passes, it carries with it the religions which have been based upon conforming men to its temporary modes and whims.

Thus the man who has in him any real depth of spirit soon outgrows the religion of social conventions, just as he outgrows the religion of ecclesiastical mythology. He finds that it merely consecrates a form of living which, though on the whole decent and honourable enough, has no genuine reality of principle and consistency, and is powerless to explain all the deeper longings and intuitions of the soul.

But the true religion must be that which places us in communion with the purpose which lies behind the universe. If, indeed, there *is* no purpose, then there can be no religion, except such rules as shall enable us to live decently and behave kindly to one another for the few years that have to elapse before our final disappearance and destruction. But if there *is* a purpose, and if that purpose is discoverable by us, then religion is that knowledge which lets us into the secret of that purpose, and shows us how we can co-operate with it, not blindly and spasmodically, but rationally and continuously, offering our lives and energies for some cause better than the passing social conventions of the hour, and conforming our wills, with always increasing precision and gladness, to an eternal end, which we are able, if only partially, to appreciate and discern.

This knowledge, and this activity proceeding from knowledge, would be for us true religion. No other religion can be called religion for thinking people, except that which consists in teaching us to take our part in the eternal purpose. We have then to ask ourselves whether there *is* any such certainty in life as may make it possible for us to give ourselves definitely to the practice of a religion which shall be the highest and most rational activity of the soul, and shall continue to hold us when the make-shift religions, based upon a consecration of the present fashions of life, have broken down and left us desolate.

" The world passeth away and the lust thereof "— the religions based on conventions rise and wane and disappear. Is there a religion which will not pass, but which will endure ?

II

WHAT IS GOD LIKE?

WHEN we speak of God we mean that Cause which has brought life into being, and that Will or Purpose which is directing life towards some definite end.

It is, of course, possible not to believe in a God at all; to believe that things have come into existence by accident, that they are as they are by accident, and that they are tending to no end at all unless it be to final destruction. There are not many men of the best intelligence and knowledge who hold this belief, but there are some, and no doubt when we consider the terrible miseries and the anarchic chaos of this world there seems to be some difficulty in believing that the world is governed by any will, or that it is working to any intelligible end at all.

Yet even if we fail to discern any beauty or goodness in the world as it is, we are still faced by the great fact that we have within us the intense desire

for a life of goodness, and truth, and beauty; we all of us recognize, more or less clearly, what these ultimate values—as the philosophers call them—are, and we realize that the search after them and the possession of them, alone gives dignity and value to life. Even if we knew certainly that this world would be destroyed by pestilence or earthquake in a few years, we should feel that we were impelled to fight for the achievement of love and beauty as having a value altogether apart from this world's continuance.

So, even if we felt ourselves bound, as few thoughtful people do now feel bound, to repudiate, as lacking in evidence, any final purpose of good for this world, we should still feel that Love in itself is an end worth living for. This is surely a fact of great significance; that we should feel love to be an end so great that it is worth while to risk our physical well-being or life itself for its attainment, even if it were certain that we all perished utterly at death. We may say of love "Though he slay me, yet will I put my trust in him." Love, this innate desire and passion to give whatever we feel to be most valuable in ourselves so that it may be united to that which is best in others, this is in itself, according to the New Testament idea, the very being and manifestation of God; it is the spirit

which underlies life, and gives it value, even supposing it were true that the world will perish and fall to dust and ashes to-morrow.

It is difficult to suppose that this passion for goodness and truth and beauty, which burns with such an ardent flame in the hearts of those whom we feel to be the most typical human beings, has no end which is destined to be fulfilled. It certainly does not always minister to the prolongation of physical life or to the increase of progeny, for it is constantly leading the best men and women to sacrifice their welfare and their lives for the sake of an ideal which is not material, and to die without progeny, and with their task on earth unfulfilled; yet it is difficult to believe that so strong a passion, and one which characterizes such noble lives, does not bear some witness to a purpose in the world which is of deep significance and of paramount value. It leads us to believe that there may be a supreme source from which these values come, and in whose being they have their final fulfilment, outside the range of space and time.

We might believe this, and we might worship God as the source of Love, even though we believed that *this* world, as we know it, is the work of some hostile and cruel influence, or a mere chance collocation of stupid or malign forces, at war with

our highest moral and aesthetic values. Even then, even if we had no hope for *this* world, and no admiration of its processes, still we might feel that in our knowledge of Love and our sense of being destined for union with Love, we had a religion which could enable us to disdain and transcend the evil forces of the world, and which gave us a hope of surviving their destruction.

The great difficulty which most people feel in believing in God arises from the cruelty and suffering which so obviously and undeniably exist in the world. There is no explaining of this away. Man suffers untold miseries, and these miseries arise not always, not indeed generally, from his deliberate vices, but far more from his ignorances, for which he is in no way responsible. Consider the terrible illnesses and deformities from which the African suffers, as Dr. Schweitzer describes them in the account of his mission. These ghastly diseases are not brought about by any deliberate infraction of the moral law, but simply by ignorance of any way of guarding against their occurrence. Men are mauled by wild beasts, they are infested with parasites, their limbs are doubled up with rheumatism from living in swamps, they are distorted by poisonous foods, emaciated by famine, they are carried off into slavery, they are tortured

by the claims of obscene and fantastic religions, and terrified by visions of all-pervading ghostly and demoniacal beings. Men are driven by their sense of honour to fight with insensate fury among themselves; their religions force them to self-torture and mutilations, their affections lead them to bring into life millions of children, whom they love, the majority of whom are destined for early and often cruel deaths. If suffering came generally on account of vice, we might the better understand it, though even so the punishment seems often to be unreasonably cruel; but it comes so much more as the result of ignorance than of sin, and of ignorance for which no one is responsible.

And not only is the suffering of man so great, but we see the same weight of pain and disease in the animal world as well. It is easy indeed to overstate the suffering of the animal world. The wounded animal either dies quickly, or, as a rule, is quickly well. Disease in animals is not prevalent to an extent which makes their lives a burden. In non-domesticated animals it is said to be scarcely known at all. Animals have no power of contemplating, as we have, the oncoming of disease and its probable ending, nor of reverting to the memory of suffering that is past. If we suffer, the greater part of our suffering consists in our previous

experience, either personal or vicarious, of pain, and in our realization that this pain may go on for hours or days ; it may grow worse ; it may deprive us of our living ; it may bring our children to destitution ; it may end, after great agony, in death. The actual suffering at the moment is not the great bulk of the burden ; it is an inappreciable part of it. But the animal has none of these considerations to face : he lives almost entirely in the present ; he is very little concerned with his family or with his future. We suffer when we lose a favourite puppy or kitten considerably more than its father or mother, or its brothers and sisters, suffer. No one can watch the life of birds or beasts without feeling that as a whole it is full of gladness, and that its quick passing is very little attended with fear or distress.

It is the suffering of innocent men that constitutes the great problem of the world's continuance : the pain of animals and men, apart from this, would be of minor importance. Yet here again we must not forget that we may very easily overstate this suffering. The people in the slums of our big towns are all too contented with their life as it is. The difficulty which all social reformers have had to overcome, from Moses to MacDonald, is that the people prefer slavery in Egypt to the travail of

passing through the wilderness into the land of promise—Whitechapel and Shoreditch, Hulme and Ancoats and Holbeck are terrible places in which to bring up human beings—but they are not unhappy places ; nor is it an easy thing to make their inhabitants as discontented as we should wish them to be with their surroundings. It seems a marvellous thing to the liver on the veldt of South Africa that rational human beings can pay three or four hundred pounds a year in order to live in a little box at the top of a lift in Belgravia, with a view over a back courtyard. It is impossible to him to imagine that such people can be happy. Yet the flat-dweller regards his life as one of great felicity, and has no desire to see green fields, or to ride over great stretches of the brown earth in the heat of the sun. The world is, no doubt, on the whole, a happy place to its inhabitants, and there are very few who desire to leave it. They will, indeed, pay vast sums for an operation which promises them a few months more of its enjoyment.

Yet even if we allow that the suffering in the world has been overstated, the fact remains that it is very real, that it is very widely extended, and, in many cases, very terrible. It could be, perhaps, justified, we feel, if it were making on the whole for goodness. But is it making for goodness ? Does all the suffer-

ing lead to a better world? If we take each individual life, it certainly does not always appear that suffering works good. Too often it seems to be of no use at all: very often indeed it would appear only to harden and hurt the sufferer. Yet though we cannot always see any purpose in suffering, certainly we can be glad on the whole that wrong doing or foolishness leads to suffering. Mankind does, on the whole, learn wisdom and right conduct through the immensity of his suffering when he does what is foolish or cruel. On the whole, unquestionably it is the doing of the anti-social thing, or the purely animal thing, which brings suffering, and happiness in the long run does go hand in hand with that which is noble and good. Though suffering shows no doubt that a foolish or a wrong thing has been done, something as we say "contrary to God's will," and therefore suffering is a thing which ought not to be; yet unquestionably in our present state we ought to be glad that we suffer, since apparently only so do we learn the difference between right and wrong. The way which has been travelled by the human race has been steep and full of toil, yet on the whole, as we look down on it, we realize that it has been not unattended with song and merriment: the way in front looks no less steep and forbidding: as the

pleasures of life become more self-conscious and acute the capacity for pain increases: yet, it is surely a hopeful ascent. We have the feeling that we are being led, that the journey has an end, and that the ending, however far off, will bring with it the happy solution of our sorrows and the satisfaction of our deepest desires.

Yet we cannot but ask ourselves whether, if the cause of all this is indeed a being of transcending Wisdom and Love, the ascent might not have been less arduous, and the lesson learnt without so much pain. Could we not have come into being with the lesson learnt, and our natures ready-made to enjoy complete happiness? We can only answer this problem by noting that in actual life as we know it the person who is automatically virtuous is infallibly dull and insipid. We have no knowledge of beauty and virtue which has not been achieved by struggle. It may therefore well be that there is something in the nature of our ultimate values which makes it inherently impossible for them to exist apart from the struggle to achieve them. The process of growing by experiment may be inherent in the power of being fully alive. There may be an eternal sonship, an eternal learning, in God Himself, as the Christian Creed indeed asserts, and it may be impossible to *be* good or beautiful

without *learning* to be good and beautiful. If this be so, then we shall agree that the struggle is part of the prize. We should "welcome each rebuff which turns earth's smoothness rough."[1] It seems most probable that this is the case, and that goodness is a synthesis attained by a real and constant effort, and is continually, as it were, breaking up, to re-form itself in new and more beautiful shapes, so that even in Heaven it can really be said, "Behold I make all things new." Creation is never completed, and to all eternity the Son is begotten of the Father, good, that is, is born and grows and suffers and achieves, not only in time, but for ever and ever.

If this be true, then we may believe that we are looking at only a very small section of life, and that we must judge it as a section, just as we judge the time of our childhood not as an end in itself, but as finding its justification in the experience which it enables us in manhood to lay hold of and enjoy. This life would then have to be judged as a small part of a long series of experiences, culminating in perfection based upon a number of right choices.

Thus, when we speak of God, we mean that eternal Source of Love and Goodness—"powerful

[1] "If seeking the Truth seems easy, we can be sure we have lost our way."—THOMSON, *Concerning Evolution.*

love" as Benjamin Franklin defined God—which is continually projecting itself into life through the never-finished process of creation, the expression of the infinite in the finite.

God does this chiefly, so far as we know, by the creation of human personalities, though for all we know there may be an immense series of creatures higher than ourselves, with natures expressing the eternal Love far more closely than we do.

Since Love expresses itself most truly in personalities, we rightly speak of God as Personal, and we believe that our fellowship with Him should be that of person with person. Yet He is not one person among many, but He is the source of personality in us all, so that we only achieve personality in so far as we are in fellowship with His infinite personality.

We are placed here for a time, perhaps it is only a very small section of our lives, in a world full of pitfalls, exposed to every kind of difficulty, and not miraculously exempted from the results of our mistakes, while we slowly and painfully learn to comprehend and co-operate with the purpose of the Universe, and come to know that nothing is creative and nothing is eternal but Love.

We build up our little empires and palaces and fellowships on a basis of vanity, or selfishness,

or malice, or hatred. They grow and flourish, and wither and perish, and thus we learn by our failures that there is no other foundation on which any lasting structure can be built but that of Love, which is alone eternal, and alone can be called God.

"The result of the whole investigation," says Dr. McTaggart, "would seem to come to this—that it is by love only that we can fully enter into that harmony with others which alone constitutes our own reality and the reality of the universe. . . . Our conclusion then is extravagant enough. Love is not only the highest thing in the universe, but the only thing. Nothing else has true reality, everything which has partial reality has it only as an imperfect form of the one perfection."

When we come to believe this, that the basis of all life is Love—powerful or creative Love—and that this Love is continually creating rich forces which proceed from itself, and return enriched by the experience of this fleeting world, into the being of God, to live consciously in Him and with Him, then we begin to see what belief in God means, how deeply it concerns us, and how profoundly it colours all our conduct and experience. When once we are convinced that this belief is true, we can then go on building up our life and that of the

world upon a safe and sure foundation, regardless of what may happen to our own brief, material existence or the possible destruction of this planet upon which this little section of our lives is passed. We belong to Love; we are the sons of Love; we are journeying towards the goal of Love; and thus we are able to be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord."

III

CREATIVE MIND

THE scientist whose business it is to study the facts of life is continually examining the processes of nature to see whether any purpose can be discerned behind this marvellous panorama of teeming life, this ceaseless round of activity. And the first impression of those who thus make it the business of their life to study nature is apt to be that there is no discernible plan at all, that there is nothing but battle and disease, cruelty and waste, anarchy and chaos.

So Darwin, in his earlier days, wrote, " What a book a devil's chaplain might write on the clumsy, wasteful, blundering, low, and horribly cruel works of nature." This he wrote in 1856. But in 1881 he wrote, " If we consider the whole universe, the mind refuses to look at it as the outcome of chance —that is, without design or purpose." This change of outlook is very significant, for it is not only the great Darwin who thus changed his opinion as he

studied more, but there has been a continuous tendency among scientists to think more and more that Nature is not merely cruel and wasteful, but that we can discern a continuous purpose, and a purpose towards that which we call " good " and " beautiful " in the age-long history of the world. So Professor Lovejoy says, " Darwinism, or the doctrine of natural selection, declares three unlovely aspects of the world—its wastefulness, its disharmony, and its cruelty—to be not simply casual details of the picture, but the very essence of that whole evolutional process which, regarded in its results and not in its methods, had seemed so admirable and so edifying to contemplate. . . . Whether the seamy aspects of Nature which the theory of natural selection is supposed to bring into relief are really centrally significant and ubiquitous aspects is a question which contemporary biology is diligently endeavouring to settle by its own proper methods. One can only say now that the dominant tendency is distinctly towards an answer in the negative."

We find ourselves in the midst of an immense process of creation : it is like going suddenly into a huge factory : we are conscious at first merely of a horrifying chaos ; terrible noises assail our ears, our eyes are shocked at the menacing appearance

of huge, gaunt, overwhelming forms; all around us we see waste and rubbish: nowhere do we discern peace, or beauty, or any completed and satisfying form. Thus, when we first contemplate Nature we are apt to see only cruelty and ugliness and waste, and no discernible purpose running through it. But such biologists as Professor J. Arthur Thomson [1] tell us that the more they study Nature the more they tend to believe that kindliness vastly outweighs cruelty, beauty vastly outweighs ugliness, the purpose towards good is continually appearing behind the surface appearance of destruction and death.

Life in its lower forms emerges almost blindly from its simplest expression. It is always feeling round, blind and almost without a mind, towards some better way of living. It experiments in every direction, and is continually setting aside its mistakes. Sometimes a race will make long and costly experiments, like the great heavily armoured beasts which we find in prehistoric times. They have, like some nations of to-day, piled up armaments to such an extent that at last they have sunk beneath their weight of armour, and have disappeared, to make room for more inventive and sociable forms of life.

[1] In *The System of Animate Nature*, from which many of the quotations in this chapter are also borrowed.

It is not, apparently, true that on the whole it has paid in life to be cruel, and self-seeking, and unsociable, and ugly. It is, so we are now assured, the animals that have been helpful to one another, and have cultivated kindly ways, and have loved beautiful colour, and have elaborated and sharpened their minds, that have tended, and are still tending, to survive. The dog is beating the lion in the race of life. Parasites who will not work, but cling on to some more vigorous life, and spend their lives in sucking, tend not only to be hideously ugly, but to degenerate.

We find Nature constantly experimenting in the direction of complexity of mind and elaboration of beauty.

" An envisaging of the long evolutionary process shows that Nature is all for health and all for beauty. The doors of parasitic and other asylums are indeed always open, but on the whole there is an advance towards the clear mind and the elementary virtues. The highest rewards of survival and success go to creatures like birds and mammals that are intelligent and self-subordinating. There are great trends in organic evolution which are congruent with the ideals that are summed up in the human concept of progress—to wit, the fuller embodiment of the true, the beautiful and the good. The

evolutionist view is encouraging and strengthening, for organic evolution has been on the whole integrative and progressive; it has made for the emergence of mind, individuality, and personality; its momentum is with us, that is to say in us and our society at our and its best; it is an ascent, not a descent, that lies behind us. Perhaps, after all, the Lord of Evolution is no new concept; for the scholars tell us that the word Jehovah may mean not only 'I am that I am,' but 'I will be what I will be.'" [1]

The human race has now arrived at a stage at which we no longer need to progress by the slow and painful process of trying all possible roads, until at last we hit on the right one, the method of "hit and miss." We have come to a stage at which we are more or less sure of the direction in which we ought to move. We can see more or less clearly the purpose and aim of life, and we can use deliberate and purposive efforts in laying aside the weights which hold us down, and cutting off the entail which bad or useless experiments in the past have fastened upon us. We should like to believe that by right thinking and by noble living we could actually transmit these newly acquired powers to our children, that,

[1] Professor J. A. Thomson in *Modern Churchman* for April 1925.

for instance, by thinking of what our children ought to be, we could actually produce new powers in the child. The biologists will not allow us to indulge this hope. They tell us there is no evidence as yet which would warrant us in believing that a parent can transmit his gains directly to his offspring. "We cannot create a desirable variation by taking thought." This sounds rather depressing news. We should like to think that our carefully thought-out ideas, the results of our painful struggles, would be registered in our children. This the scientist, so far, will not allow us to believe.[1] But there is another side to the picture. We can by nurture foster every potentiality for good which exists, and we can refuse expression to everything in our nature which is definitely dysgenic or evil. We cannot create, apparently, what was not there originally, but of all the multitude of possibilities existent, and of all the new variations appearing, we can choose which shall be fostered, and which shall be checked and destroyed.

Variations appear, so far as we know, in a race without any reason at all; but, when once they appear, they remain unless they are forcibly checked. We do not know what powers our inheritance

[1] For a discussion of this whole subject of the transmission of acquired characteristics, see Professor J. A. Thomson's *Concerning Evolution*, chap. ii.

includes. Religion teaches us that it includes the power ultimately to become perfect, as God is perfect. Science does not deny that this may be true. It can only say that we have not yet got evidence of it. We can, by encouraging everything within us that we know to be good, give a quick and encouraging reception to every improvement which Nature sends.

Again, we know now that our mental states do directly affect our health, and so our power of entering into the inheritance. Disease is, Professor Thomson says, practically unknown among wild animals. It is part of the price we pay for our elaborate development of mind, and for the non-elimination, by the withdrawal of the weak from the struggle of life, of those who are not fitted to become parents. But if the elaboration of the mind has brought us disease, which is almost unknown in Nature, it has also brought with it the counteraction of disease, in the purposeful control of health by mind. We *know* the purpose of Nature : we can co-operate *deliberately* with it : we can refuse to perpetuate bad stocks, we can nurture all that is good, and *we know the influence of a good mind upon the body*.

" Pleasant emotions," says Professor Thomson, " favour the secretions of the digestive juices, the rhythmic movements of the food-canal, and other

absorption of the aliment." "Contrariwise, unpleasant emotional disturbance and worry of all sorts have been proved to have a retardative influence on the digestive processes." "It is now well known," says Professor Dearborn, "that no sense-experience is too remote from the innervations of digestion to be taken into its associations, and serve as a stimulus of digestive movements and secretions." "Emotion," says Professor Thomson, "may influence the production of adrenalin by the core of the adrenal glands, and a slight increase in this potent substance constricts the smaller blood vessels, raises the blood pressure, excites and freshens the muscles, increases the sugar content of the blood, and so on. In the general stimulation of the essential circulation in all constructive parts of the body, such as the brain, the muscles, and the digestive organs, joy exerts one of its most conspicuous benefits, and one that no one can doubt or ignore. . . . These are facts which point to the conclusion that a gladsome mind may also increase the integrative function of the nervous system. It is an indubitable fact that a joy—say of maternity, or discovery, or artistic creation—may become an exhilaration and enthusiasm of thought or will; but the same is true of bodily welfare. Good tidings will invigorate the flagging energies of a band of explorers; an unexpected visit will change a wearied

homesick child, as by magic, into a dancing gladsome elf; a religious joy will make men and women transcend the ordinary limits of our frail humanity."

"How it comes about is not yet quite clear, but somehow the oil of joy, as the Scriptures call it, operates so as to make the limbs more subtle, and the face to shine. Emotion has its physical accompaniment in motions throughout the body, in changes in secretion and circulation, and also in some other way whereby influences from an emotional 'centre,' such as, perhaps, the optic thalamus (the second great division of the brain), surge up into the cerebral cortex, the seat of the higher mental processes, where joy and activity may be correlated."

Thus Nature, which gives to man sorrows and pains which animals and insects do not know, gives to him by his knowledge of the great purpose of good behind all the slow, hard, educational process of Nature, a possibility of joy and peace, which not only helps him to bear patiently the sorrows which would seem to be an essential part of the educative process, but is an actual antidote to pain and disease through the power of joy and peace in believing, which in itself can conquer disease, and make him at one with the healthsome activity of the Divine Word, which works unseen in all life from the meanest to the highest.

IV

WHAT WAS THE RELIGION OF JESUS?

MR. CLUTTON-BROCK, a few years ago, read a paper in which he imagined a conversation between Jesus and Satan. Satan is trying to tempt Jesus to give up His teaching. "You will never succeed," he says, "in interesting people in your teaching; they will never understand what you mean by the Kingdom of Heaven: you will waste your time in explaining to them what you know about God. Why not give up the attempt, and get them instead to worship you as God? You have so much personal charm, you inspire men with the sense of your unique authority: they are prepared to worship you, they will gladly call you God, they will pray to you, and fight for you, and die for you, they will gladly kill the people who say you are not God; and you can easily bring this about. But you will never persuade them to follow your teaching. It is far too difficult: it demands far too much effort." And Jesus turns

on Satan, and says, " Now I know you are indeed the devil : that is the very temptation that I myself have felt : I know how easy it would be to make men do as you say, but this would indeed be the great act of treachery against God : the surrender of the work for which I came into the world."

This is exactly what has happened : though it is not what Jesus willed to happen. If He had acquiesced in this, He would not have been rejected. Yet He is still rejected, as much by those who call Him " Lord, Lord," who insist that He must be called God and yet do not the things which He said, as by those who reject both Him and His teaching alike. How few people there are, even among professing Christians, who are at all interested in the *religion* of Jesus—the religion by which He Himself worked—the content of the actual faith by which He lived. Yet surely this is the one thing which is the essential Christianity. " Not every one that saith unto me, ' Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven " is a characteristic saying of Jesus, and yet how very little the professed followers of Jesus have cared to know what He believed the will of the Father to be, and how He demonstrated that will in His own teaching and life ? For Jesus taught us a *science*

of living. He knew what we call the mystery of life, and He came to show us how we can live courageously and intelligently, as those who hold the key to the mystery in their hands. Yet how soon men forgot that Jesus continually said not "Worship Me," but "Follow Me." How quickly they came to feel that if only they made acts of worship directed to Jesus, Jesus would in return save them from hell, and from a justly outraged and indignant God, and that this was what was meant by being a Christian.

The great Indian poet, Kabir, taught men that no outward worship and no sacrifices could satisfy men: only life in God could fill the soul. "The Yogi, the Sanyasi, the Ascetics, are disputing one with another. Kabir says: 'O brother! he who has seen the radiance of love, he is saved. O servant, where dost thou seek Me? Lo! I am beside thee. I am neither in temple nor in mosque: I am neither in Kaaba nor Kailash: neither am I in rites and ceremonies, nor in Yoga and renunciation. If thou art a true seeker thou shalt at once see me: thou shalt meet me in a moment of time.'" To-day, and very soon, indeed, after Kabir's death, his followers taught that you must propitiate God by "many cocoanuts ceremoniously broken: many betel leaves, properly prepared with dew,

must be consecrated and chewed, and that greatest of Indian delicacies—the water in which the feet of the teacher have been washed—must be provided in abundance, mixed with earth, and made up into pills to be swallowed by the faithful. The follower of Kabir is asked to-day to whom does he pray, and he answers quite simply, 'To Kabir.' 'But who is your God?' and the answer is, quite naturally, 'Kabir.' 'But to whom did Kabir pray?' 'Kabir prayed to Ram, and we pray to Kabir to pray to Ram for us.'"[1] Just in the same way Christians easily forget that Jesus pointed men to God, and told them how we can reach up to God by the way He Himself reached, and with His aid: but that is difficult: it needs effort, and it is easier to say, "Let us worship Jesus, and trust that He will pray to His Father to make up for our deficiencies." But Jesus sternly reminds us that His brethren are only those who hear the word of God and keep it. His religion is a Way, and a Way in which He Himself walked, and in which we all have to walk with Him. What was the Way? What are the salient principles in the religion by which Jesus Himself lived? (1) First of all, we should put the *intimacy of our relationship with God.* Man is not related to the power behind

[1] Pratt: *India and its Faith.*

the universe merely as a creature is related to its Creator, or a servant to his master ; his relationship is too deep to be expressed by such metaphors as these : he is as a son to a father. As a son actually partakes of his father's nature, and proceeds forth from his father's life, as he can count upon some measure of understanding of a common character and a common purpose, because of their partaking in so intimate a fellowship—so is man to God. Nothing less intimate than " father and son " can describe the relationship. Jesus was absolutely confident, and wished us, too, to be confident in a like degree, that the purpose behind our lives was wholly beneficent and kind, in the sense that a father is kind, and personal in the sense that fatherhood must be personal : not that we could always at the moment discern the kindness or appreciate the purpose or see the person, but that we can be absolutely certain that the purpose is there, and that it is *good*, good also in a sense that we ourselves would call good, if we could understand it—not such a purpose that He would give us stones for bread, or scorpions for fish—but good in a sense which we shall apprehend as good, if not now, at least increasingly as we progress in spiritual growth and knowledge.

(2) And this sure purpose of good is not only

towards those of us who are good but towards good and evil alike. Herein Jesus saw more deeply than the Jewish prophets. "Ye shall be perfect," He says, "as your Father is perfect, who makes the sun to shine on the evil and good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust." The gifts of God are poured out on all alike, whether we know them or not, whether we take them or refuse them.

(3) And this constant and dependable love of God is ministered to us by those prophetic spirits to whom are first given the understanding of God's gifts, that they may in turn pass them on to others. There is a hierarchy in religious knowledge, as we know that there is in art and in scientific discovery. To one man is given an intimate knowledge which he makes available for others, and so through his "merits and intercession" it becomes available to us. So, in fact, we all of us attain to an understanding of beauty, or to the power to make a bridge, or to hear messages from the other side of the world. So Jesus says that we shall come to the Father through Him primarily, for to Him is given first this new understanding of God, and then through those who in every age, "apostles" and "prophets," will discern His teaching and receive His commission.

(4) Yet though there is this hierarchy, to some being given the place of stewards, and to others

that of labourers in the Kingdom, yet Jesus is at pains to show us that we are all alike God's children. "I go," He says, "to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God." Now if some very distinguished person, let us say Gladstone, had said to me, "I am going to pay a visit to my university and your university, and to my college and your college," I should be sure that he wished me to feel that however immense the distance might seem to me to be between his position in the world and mine, he wanted to emphasize the truth that we had a common culture and a common home. We were both alike the children of a common mother: sons of the same house. This, evidently, Jesus wanted us to understand: we were not to think that He was on a pedestal from which He could see and do things which we must never venture to hope to imitate; but that we were to expect confidently that what was possible for Him would be possible one day for us all through Him. He is "the first born among many brethren."

(5) Jesus believed, and it was to Him the very core of reality, that there was a sphere of action, and resources of energy hidden from the ordinary man of the world. This He called the Kingdom of Heaven. Men who lived as the children of this world live, eating and drinking, buying and selling,

marrying and giving in marriage, were like men who live in a dream. If they could wake up they would awake from dreaming about reality to reality itself. In a dream, we dream about real things which actually exist, but we experience them in distorted relationships: the elements of our dream are real things, but the action of our dream is nonsense, or at most a feeble and symbolic attempt to conceive reality. So Jesus saw the life of this world, as it is generally lived, as a dream-like distortion of reality, or a feeble and ineffective attempt to grasp the significance of this as yet inapprehensible world of the real. He Himself knew the Kingdom of reality: He lived in it: He longed to make others live in it, as He did. He knew that first of all, before you could live in it, and experience its powers, you must see it. It was there all the time, but you must be "born again," you must be "pure in heart," you must have a "single eye" or you would never see it at all. As the artist teaches us to see beauty and significance in things which we have seen every day and never noticed, so Jesus would lend us His eyes, so that we may see the Kingdom of reality, our Father's purpose apprehended and revealed, and made available for our healing.

(6) This entrance He knew he could achieve for us,

but not by presenting us with a ticket of admission, as the Lord Chamberlain can grant you entrance to a levée if you have sufficient interest to procure it. You must go through a "baptism," a spiritual experience comparable to a total immersion of the body under the waters, a submerging of your ordinary outlook so that you may have your ordinary values wiped off, as the dust of travel and the uncleanness of the road is washed away by the bath. And not only a "baptism," a negative process of "putting off"—that is, of getting rid of the "oldness of the letter" is necessary. But there is a *positive* process as well. You must "eat and drink" of the spirit which was in Jesus. You must not just say, "Lord, Lord," or pray "for Jesus Christ's sake," you must absorb and assimilate His character and teaching until His life is yours just as your daily bread becomes "you," and is made the stuff out of which your daily activities are wrought. This characteristic teaching of "baptism" and "spiritual feeding" has become hardened and materialized into a teaching about the necessity of ceremonial observances which, divorced from this teaching, is the very deadness of the letter which killeth; but as Jesus gave it, we see its immense significance and its congruity with all life as we know it. Men are always trying

to escape being baptized into the spirit of their teachers, and from feeding upon the flesh and blood of their lives by wearing some badge, or repeating some formula, which will put them under the formal patronage of the teacher and enable them to escape the trouble of being baptized into his spirit. But, Jesus says, there is no escape from being baptized into His spirit and becoming dead to the old values, from eating the new bread and drinking the new wine, " assimilating," as we say, the spirit by which He lived, if you would see the Kingdom of God.

(7) For this Kingdom of reality is not *easily* found. It is only found by those who are prepared to go and sell all that they have and buy it. It is only the violent—those who knock until the whole house rings with the sound of their knocking, who ask until even the most unwilling would be forced to answer, who find the kingdom ; and yet it is found often by little children who stumble upon it almost unawares. Here again Jesus speaks as the true artist. You may stumble on beauty in your simplest experiences ; yet, if you are to secure it so that it will not escape you, and live with it, and make it part of your life, you must not content yourself with these chance encounters, or the beauty of life will elude you ; but you must bend all your

energies that way, and realize that Beauty, like the God of the Jews, is a jealous God, who will not tolerate other gods in His temple. A man learning a new game stumbles into an amazingly good stroke, yet he will never do it again. Henceforward he must deliberately pursue perfection, with entire devotion and concentration of spirit. You cannot serve God and Mammon. You cannot use Truth for making dividends, or goodness for making yourself popular, or beauty as a selfish possession, or they will elude you; and not merely elude you, but they will grind you to powder. Jesus saw that if you want to live with reality, you must first count the cost, and the cost which He asks of you will be every power you possess, every minute of your time, every ounce of energy you can command, and the reward will be—reality—God, and nothing else.

(8) As men and women are drawn into this Kingdom and begin to live by virtue of its powers they will find themselves transforming this world in virtue of the powers which this knowledge gives them. They will "overcome evil spirits and cast them out," they will abolish sickness, they will feed multitudes with resources hitherto undreamed of, they will "tell mountains to remove," and will "walk upon the seas." These supra-normal powers are indeed not the main reason for which

the Kingdon is to be sought ; they are a by-product of its possession. As we come to realize the rationality and friendliness of the universe, and our own relation of sons in a father's house, the powers of the universe become to us friendly and intelligible, " even the devils become subject to us," the passions which once were the occasion of stumbling to us become the occasion of our wealth—nationality, sex, natural beauty, learning—all the powers which men used to fear, like some obscene witchcraft, and which seemed to lead to disaster and death, are harnessed in the service of the Kingdom, and become subservient to its purposes. The Word (or Purpose) of God is made Flesh, and dwells among us, and even in this world we touch and handle things unseen.

(9) So there was to grow up a society, or fellowship of those who are " living in the Kingdom," those who are baptized or immersed in the realm of the new values, and are feeding upon the teaching of Jesus about the Universe and God. This fellowship would only be partly visible ; you would not, said Jesus, be readily able to lay your finger upon it and say, " Lo, here is Christ," or " Lo, there." You would hear the sound of the spirit, but you would not be able to grasp it and pin it down, or put it in a tabernacle, or lead it about on a chain.

Its leaders would not be the people who would have titles of "reverend" or "Father" or "master" by which they could easily be distinguished: the leaders and rulers of the fellowship would be those who were pre-eminent in humility and service and insight, and they would be known, not by their claims, but by their fruits. So St. Paul said afterwards, "If anyone wants to know whether I am an apostle or not, I would refer them to you, whom I have begotten in Christ. You are the seal or 'letters of orders' which confirm my apostleship." Many of those in the fellowship, said Jesus, would not know that they were in it. They would disclaim all knowledge of Jesus or His teaching: yet by their works of mercy they would display their membership and the reality of their baptism. Among them would be harlots, and outcasts from the religious world, who, because they had shown kindness and love were, without their own knowledge, in the Kingdom.

(10) As Jesus proceeded in His ministry, He seems to have lost some of that glad anticipation of success which marked His early teaching. He could not, at first, believe that all men would not see the intense vision of beauty and reality which He so clearly saw. In the first fresh springtide of His ministry He saw Satan falling like lightning from Heaven.

He saw the Kingdom already established in the lifetime of His hearers. Yet it was not long before he sees more intensely the dense blindness of men, the darkness and opacity of the veil that is over their eyes, their placid and fatal contentment in their darkness, and their intense and virulent hatred of those who bring them light. He saw that those who bring light to them that sit in darkness are not welcomed as benefactors, but are stoned and crucified, and He began to foretell His own rejection and violent death, and that only so could man, in his present evil state, be delivered. He must die, and only through death rise again. And so it was to be.

In fact, though not, so far as we can see, by necessity, man would not accept the deliverance offered except by crucifying the deliverer ; and so Jesus had to bring deliverance not by teaching and by living, but by death, and worse than death, through centuries of misunderstanding and degradation of His teaching, until the leaven is almost lost in the lump of ignorance and stupidity ; and now, at last, as it seems, He is rising again. He is understood to-day as He has never been understood before. Nations are beginning to see their salvation in His Gospel of meekness. Churches are beginning to turn to His teaching of the Kingdom :

the learned are beginning to see that only through the Spirit and outlook of Jesus can we grasp and retain our hold on truth. He is rising again, and we see Him now "seated on the right hand of God," enthroned in the very seat of reality and truth, the Teacher of teachers, the Way *to* God, the Truth *about* God, the Life *of* God.

V

IMMORTALITY

TO some people the chief attraction of religion is that it ensures, or appears to ensure, the certainty of immortality. Religion without this certainty would seem to many people a religion not worth having, scarcely worthy of the name of religion at all. Yet some of the noblest religions lived on and retained their hold over mankind without giving any assurance to their votaries of this personal immortality. The best of the Greeks and Romans professed a religion which ensured among some men a very noble type of life, and gave a real solace in adversity, yet did not promise more than a hope that possibly they might live again in some attenuated form after this life was over. There was no note of certainty, such as many people regard as essential to a religion. The Buddha taught that immortality was the greatest of all curses. Immortality had no place in the religion of the early Jews. They had a passionate trust in God,

but no hope of personal existence after death. "The dead praise not thee, O God, neither all they that go down into silence" is characteristic of the religion of the Jew. There was something very noble and unselfish in the religion of men who could thus find solace in the thought of the eternity of God and His goodness, even though they might not be alive to share in His triumph. The reward of goodness was regarded as being success in *this* life; after this life all was dark and uncertain. Yet even so, good men could rejoice to know that goodness went on and triumphed, even if they were not there to share it. "I know that all things come to an end, but Thy commandment is exceeding broad." We have surely much to learn from this unselfish preoccupation in the triumph of good. It is more noble than the religion of those, who may perhaps call themselves Christians, but regard goodness merely as a disagreeable form of self-denial necessary to ensure the continuance in another life of the sensuous and perhaps very selfish pre-occupations of their present lives. Come what may to the world, they must at all events be assured that *they* will go on—

> When I can see my title clear
> To mansions in the skies,
> I bid farewell to all my fears,
> And wipe my weeping eyes.

This desire, over and above all other considerations, for our own personal continuance for ever and ever, has nothing very noble or religious about it, and if goodness be regarded merely as the price which has to be paid for an endless extension of our present existence, such a religion falls below the level of morality altogether.

The later Jews, after the captivity, tended to believe in existence after death. The religious novel, which we call the Book of Job, was written with the object of showing how untrue was the view that virtue in this world gets its own reward. (The last chapter, in which Job is given his reward in the coin of worldly prosperity, is almost certainly an addition intended to make the book more palatable to the ordinary piety of the day.)

In the time of Our Lord, the question of immortality was still an open question among religious Jews. The Pharisees believed in "a resurrection of the dead," the Sadducees denied the possibility of resurrection: both parties were reckoned within the pale of the Jewish Church. The argument of the Sadducees was that as our life consists of relationships which are, by their nature, only fitted for this world, the thought of their eternal continuance was manifestly absurd: the much married, or the unhappily married, woman would

not be thankful for a continuation of her marriages in another world. So also, it might be argued people might not desire the continuation of other relationships founded on this worldly life—fathers, ancestors, employers, kings, might all be an incubus if these relationships were to continue eternally; so also the imperfections of our bodily constitution, these we should certainly desire should come to an end. The question of the Sadducees, "Whose wife shall she be in the resurrection, for seven men had her to wife?" is a natural protest against the idea of immortality which taught the continuance *ad infinitum* of our present worldly relationships and conditions. Jesus at once cut through this difficulty. "In the resurrection," He said, or "They that are accounted worthy of the resurrection [they] neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven." There are that is, relationships—excellently adapted for this stage of life—which are *not* eternal, they have their purpose and pass away—father, mother, husband, wife, physical strength, nationality—all these are "accidents"; they are not, unless they have become spiritualized, of the permanent structure of the life and personality; they do not "rise again," death ends them. Yet, though Our Lord agrees so far with the objection

of the Sadducees, He declares that they " greatly err " in feeling this objection to be a valid one as against *any* idea of immortality. " God," he says, " was not ashamed to be called the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob " ; the Eternal does bear a relation to men who come into the world, who are born, and marry and beget children, and die. Yet he cannot be thought of as the God of " dead " men ; the Ever Living has no relation to the dead. So then, if that title, " God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," means anything, it means that there was something, some element of life, greater and more far-reaching than this marrying and giving in marriage, this eating and drinking, these births and deaths and buryings, in the lives of those typical men. This title, Our Lord would appear to say, is no empty title. There was something about those men which transcended the relationships of this casual and temporal life, some element of their lives by which they partake of God and God lays hold of them. God is the principle of Life, and all who have Life partake in Him. " Those," He says (according to the fourth Gospel), " who keep My saying shall never see death." There is a " divine spark " in men, which, if it is kept alive, enables them to pass through the experiences of this physical life,

and to pass beyond it into the eternal life of God.

Whether all men are destined to attain this immortality, or whether it is a tender plant which can be allowed to wither and die, we do not know. It might seem probable that those who, having the power to co-operate with God's purposes for them, turn away and refuse their co-operation, commit spiritual suicide, and their eternal life perishes and disappears. Yet, on the other hand, it may be thought improbable that God ever allows any of His works to be finally abortive, and that ultimately every life achieves its destined perfection. The answer to this question we do not know. We know only that in so far as we ourselves have been able to identify our lives with the eternal purposes of God, those lives become one with God, and partake of His eternity, and over that part of our lives death has no power.

We naturally long to know much more than this about the nature of Immortality. We long to know what eternal life is like, what our occupation there will be, what measure of recognition we shall have of our friends and they of us, how far our present pursuits and tastes are preparing us for our pursuits in the other world. Of all this we must confess we know very little indeed. Many people think they

know more through the teachings of Psychical Research and through Spiritualism: but there is much that is extremely disappointing in this kind of research, and there are very few wise and balanced people who feel sure that they know more at the end of prolonged research than when they began, unless it be the extreme difficulty of believing evidence which has not been scientifically checked.

I would myself go so far as to say that I believe that in a very few cases, a very few out of the vast number of reported cases, there is evidence that here and there a real and intelligent message comes from those who have gone on beyond this world, and that occasionally these messages are well attested, and have a real value. They are generally from those who have quite recently left this world, and as time passes, if messages continue at all, they become more and more vague, and then cease. If this belief is well founded, it does, at all events, tally with the evidence of the Gospel about the passing of Jesus from this world. According to the evidence of St. Paul, which is probably the earliest and safest evidence, and is also that of an educated man, Jesus appeared several times to many people immediately after His death, and then passed into a region in which such appearances ceased, and His presence became available, and increasingly definite and

powerful, not by "appearances," but by His Spirit, His character, which was realized as a new and powerful presence in the hearts of those who had known and loved Him.

I do not believe that we shall ever get to know much more about life after death from psychical research, because, in all probability that life is totally beyond our powers of description. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, what God hath prepared for them that love Him." Just as you cannot explain to your favourite dog your enjoyment of the book you are reading, nor explain to your dearest friend, who happens to be totally unmusical, your delight in music, so probably our most intimate friends beyond this life cannot communicate to us the description of the life they lead or the pleasures they enjoy.

We should like to know how much of that which we have loved in our friends will transcend death. Here, I think, we must, in the words of one of our great living teachers, realize the *austerity* of the Christian doctrine of immortality. There is much that we love here which, *in its present form*, is of the earth, earthly. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."

In our friendships we need to learn to pass beyond

those elements in love which time and material forces can destroy. We know how a burn or an explosion can so destroy the most beautiful face that in a moment it becomes a thing of horror, which only intense love can enable us to regard with equanimity. We know how quickly disease or accident can destroy the brain or reduce the most active person to impotence. If our love is centred on these outward manifestations of personality, we are always at the mercy of accident: our treasure can in a moment be taken from us. We have to learn the hard lesson of not centreing our affection upon anything which time can destroy, if we want to be sure that our friendship will be eternal. The adventitious attractions, so very real and valuable in this life, of sex, and physical beauty, and physical kinship, and a common nationality, and a common love of some sport or intellectual attainment, are all subject to change and decay: what alone can endure is the participation in a common love and purpose—the purpose of God. Those who have been united here in the pursuit of that Will, will, we believe, be so united in the world beyond death.

There is one problem connected with Immortality which ought to be discussed, even though it may rouse the opposition of those who would otherwise be in sympathy with what has already been written.

It is the problem of pre-existence, and the plurality of lives.

It has been held by some of the greatest thinkers all down the ages, by Plato, by Origen, by Wordsworth, by Schopenhauer, and by almost all Oriental philosophers, that man, when he comes into the world, comes with a certain experience which has been gained in a pre-existent state. We find that people are extraordinarily unequal in their instinctive knowledge of what is good and true when they first begin to show intelligence in this life. In regard both to mathematics, music, morality, and other branches of knowledge, there are some quite young people who seem to grasp with extraordinary readiness, as though they only had to be reminded of that which they already well knew, the knowledge which is put before them, while there are others who have to learn by that slow drudgery which accompanies a new and unwonted experience. It is certainly one possible explanation of this curious inequality of knowledge and experience in young people that they have already acquired this experience in former lives ; it is not the only possible explanation, but it is, perhaps, one which solves more problems than any other ; nor does it seem to be opposed to any doctrine of the Christian faith.

This explanation can also be applied to the extraordinary sense which some people have on meeting a person for the first time that they have already known them intimately and can discuss with them any subject as they would with an old friend, with the certainty that they will find themselves in fellowship and agreement, and in full possession of a long, common experience.

Those who hold this doctrine of pre-existence believe, also, that the likeness of children to their parents, in regard to moral and psychical traits of character, can be accounted for by the fact that their souls, when coming into a new life, are drawn naturally to inhabit the body prepared by those parents with whose characters they are already in sympathy.

If we were to adopt this theory of pre-existence, it would be natural to us to suppose that, as we had lived through other lives and acquired a certain imperfect measure of experience before coming into this world, so there was some reason to expect that this life would not complete the whole experience necessary for our perfection. There is so much which we ought to learn, which most of us have no chance of learning in this one life, that it would not seem unreasonable for us to have a series of lives, whether lived here or elsewhere,

in which we could complete those experiences which had been either cut short or totally lost in this life. If this be the case, we should suppose that those who have learnt the lessons of this life would not return to this world: those who, for any reason, have failed to learn those lessons might have to return here again to learn them; some who need not return might be led from a passion to save the world to postpone their promotion and come back as saviours of the race.

It is objected against this view that we none of us have any recollection of former lives, and that if we passed on to another life and retained no recollection of what had happened to us here, our new life would be of no value to us. It might, I think, be replied that there is very much which happens to us here which we very quickly forget and which, yet, has a profound influence upon our lives. We can probably remember very few of the details of the books we have read or the sermons and speeches we have heard. We cannot remember many of the details of our encounters with even those friends who have had the most profound influence in our lives. It does not, therefore, follow, that because we forget people or things they have not influenced us. Our characters are, indeed, made up of incidents which are forgotten and yet

whose results are of permanent importance to us, and have shaped and controlled our lives.

Supposing it to be true that we are destined to pass through other lives, we can, I think, be sure that we shall be drawn in other lives to love inevitably the people whom we have loved here. Dr. McTaggart, whose book *Human Immortality and Pre-Existence* is a powerful argument in favour of this doctrine, says :

> If, therefore, love has joined together two people in this life, who have, on the assumption we have been discussing, good reason for believing that their existences are bound up with one another, not for one life only, but for ever, this would not involve their meeting in every life, any more than it would involve their meeting every day of each life. Love can survive occasional absences, and is often even stronger for them. And the universe is on a large scale, which might require long absences. What we are entitled to believe is that while time remains their eternal nearness must continually find its expression in proximity, as in temporal life.

Sir Henry Jones, the philosopher, writing after the death of his son, says :

> I see my boy prepared in the womb of things, led through form after form, from stage to stage of being, amidst the low root of things, emerging ever with some new possibility from some dumb experience deeper than sleep ; and at last appearing, not as nature, but as Spirit, awake and purposive, filled with derived instincts, treasured possibilities, now to break forth into the light

of open day, to learn a new communion with God, who guided him through all the darkness of unconscious being.

And again :

Nature is not dead, nor are its changes the swinging and breaking of senseless waves. It is spirit incarnate, spirit breaking into manifestations like a sunbeam into rainbow colours, caught up by the senses and lifted into significance for the mind, purpose for the adventurous will, emotion that gives the worth of things and melts them into unity with the soul, and the soul with itself. And Spirit, the spirit which is eternal, immeasurable God, knows its way : it does not fail, nor pause for death. Death lies in the hollow of his hand, a tamed thing and obedient. He guides His own through death ; through death after death, into life after life.

I am not suggesting that belief in pre-existence or plurality of lives is a part of the Christian faith, or that the arguments in favour of it are unanswerable, but I confess that I feel myself largely in agreement with Dr. McTaggart, who says at the end of his book on Human Immortality :

In the years which have passed I have become more firmly convinced that the nature of reality can be shown to be such as to justify a belief, both in immortality and in pre-existence.

There remains to discuss the question of the ultimate retention of personality. We do not want merely to be *absorbed* in God, merely to become

identified with a Divine purpose. This, though it is a noble idea, inasmuch as it involves a paramount desire for the eternity of good, yet does not satisfy our aspirations. In creating individuals, God was apparently carrying out some good and necessary purpose. What we call the highest life is that which is most individual. Mr. Clutton-Brock said somewhere, "All cats make love alike; but we expect every man, because he *is* a man, to make love in a different way from any other man." Human life is distinguished from all other life by its extreme individuality. Life would not be richer, we feel, but poorer, if we all became alike, even if we all became intensely good. We need, not only that we should all be good, but that we should all be good in a different way. An endless repetition of the same type of beauty, even if it were the best type, would be a nightmare. This individualizing process must, we believe, have an object in the scheme of life, and therefore be destined in some form to endure. Therefore we are justified in supposing that the object of the Universe is not to procure a monotonous unison, an endless repetition of one type, or the gradual absorption of all individual types into one all undifferentiated existence. Rather the object of life seems to be to increase the individualizing process, while making each indi-

vidual contribute to the harmony of the whole, as the members of the body contribute by their specialization, and not by their absence of differentiation, to the total strength of the body. When " Christ lives in us " it will not be an endless repetition of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, but a continually new upspringing of grand and surprising types of beauty and vigour, all subserving the one end of manifesting perfectly the Will of God, as Jesus manifested it in the particular circumstances of Galilee, two thousand years ago.

This evident purpose of nature gives us confidence that we shall not know ourselves and others less as individuals, when we pass from this world, but that we shall pass to a more abundant and more self-conscious life, as we increase in the knowledge of God. We shall then learn not to cling to those material aids by which we have climbed to the spiritual love of human beings, nor to put our trust in any sensuous form of apprehending truth. We are not to despise these aids, for through them we do indeed come to a knowledge of truth, but they will pass, and over them death has power : we shall learn to fix our love on that element in life over which death has no power, and we shall believe that that element in us will pass through the death of the body unscathed, and in that element which is

our true self, we shall eternally know God and one another, and no element in love which is now ministered to us through sensuous avenues will lose anything of its real warmth and value, because the modes of its expression which now are dear to us will have been superseded by new modes whose nature we cannot now so much as conceive.

VI

THE NECESSITY OF A CHURCH

WE may, I think, take it for granted that the great majority of the present generation feel that it is quite unnecessary to belong to any church organization. Many, indeed, would say that it is not only unnecessary, but that it is positively harmful to anyone who desired to be really religious. There is a general belief among younger people of the present day that you can be far more religious if you do not belong to any church at all. Supposing that the present generation is right in their belief, we are faced with an entirely new experiment in religious life. Have we any reason to suppose that this experiment is likely to be successful? Hitherto it has always appeared to be necessary, for the preservation and deepening of the spiritual life, to have some external cultus through which the deepest aspirations of man shall have visible outward expression. But we cannot disguise from ourselves that a very large number of

earnest-minded people believe that in the future we shall be able to dispense with membership in any external community, and to live in the spiritual world without any visible membership in an external religious society.

We turn, perhaps naturally, to the New Testament to find out what Christ and His Apostles taught about this problem. But we are immediately brought up against the fact that, so far as we know, both Christ and His Apostles regarded the end of the world as likely to occur almost immediately. It would, therefore, have been inconceivable that any preparation should be made for the continuance of any outward organization, and it is quite probable that those passages in the New Testament which seem to take it for granted that a continuous external organization should be set up are due to the outlook of those of the second generation of Christians and do not belong to the outlook of Christ and His immediate followers.

If, as it appears, we are right in believing that Christ expected the end of the world to come within the natural lifetime of those who heard Him, we cannot suppose that He contemplated the setting up of an elaborate organization with ritual and officers and an apparatus for corporate worship.

It would seem as though the eye of Christ

so clearly contemplated the invisible society of those who were held together in fellowship by their love of God and man, who were able to apprehend the beauty and goodness of the spiritual world, even when seen through all the mists and error of this external world in which they lived, that He scarcely seemed to contemplate, or to provide for, any organization which should express this fellowship in the outward world.

It is true that He spoke of leaders and followers, of shepherds and sheep; it is true that He set apart certain men who were to be fishers of other men, but it would not appear that in doing this He intended to set up an order of sacerdotal functionaries to be ministers of a ceremonial cultus. It is true that He spoke about the necessity of baptism, but the baptism of which He spoke when He said "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?" or again, "Are ye able to be baptized with the baptism wherewith I am baptized?" was a deep inward experience not necessarily connected with any outward act, an experience which involved the immersion of the whole character and life in the sea of spiritual experience, out of which the person so immersed rose again with an entirely new set of values, and henceforth saw the world from a totally

different standpoint. Jesus valued the rite of external baptism solely in so far as it implied and set forward this spiritual experience.

Again, we find Christ celebrating in place of the Passover a meal in which He is Himself the host and the food. But we cannot be certain that He intended this to be an ordinance carried on from one generation to another, much less can we be sure that He would have looked upon the carrying out of this ceremonial as the most important activity of His followers. If we try to put ourselves back into the circumstances in which the Eucharist was instituted, we seem to see that what Christ said was that when His followers were gathered together in the spirit of sincere brotherhood for a fraternal meal, they would find that the true nourishment of their life was not so much the bread and wine which constituted the food of their bodies as the character and self-sacrifice which they had known in Him, and which, through His Spirit, would become the life of His followers, and would be far more really the source of their strength than any material food which the body received.

Christ warned His immediate followers that they must never allow anyone to call them "Father" or "Master" or "Teacher," since all men have really only one teacher, who is God. It is difficult,

therefore, to suppose that He contemplated the foundation of an order of teachers or priests who were to come between man and God. Yet it is quite plain that St. Paul regarded himself as an apostle, a father, and a teacher of his flock. But he expressly says that he was an apostle, not because he was made so by any external authority, but because he had proved himself to be so in the actual experience of life, by the fact that he had converted these people out of darkness into light.

We shall, then, be right in believing that our primary loyalty is due, not to any external society, but to the unseen fellowship of all men and women who love God and who are living in the power of the spiritual life. It is not necessary that these people should wear any visible uniform or have any external signs by which they should recognize one another. Those who have had spiritual experience recognize the spiritual life in others who have had the same experience. This fellowship in the invisible church is no shadowy or unreal thing ; it is the deepest and most real experience that we can possibly have ; it transcends class and race and sex.

Thus far we believe that the modern outlook is justified by the teaching of Christ. No external organization can include all those values which

Christ spoke of when He told us about the Kingdom of Heaven. It is this Kingdom of Heaven which is expressed in all true art, and in all simple goodness, and in all sincere search after truth to which our primary loyalty is due. Of this Church it is true to say *extra ecclesian nulla salus*—outside this Church there is no salvation.

We are now faced with this much more difficult problem. Can we be satisfied with fellowship in a society which has no material organization at all? Very many people now believe that we can. I want, however, to urge upon those younger people who are now setting up homes of their own that they should remember that so far in the history of the world this membership of the Kingdom of God has always been ministered through some external society. Even if they themselves feel that they can continue to serve God without the help of any visible church, are they sure that they can hand this treasure on to their children? It may, of course, be that they are right in their supposition that God is now going to teach us in a new way, hitherto unknown, without the help of any outside religious organization. But, indeed, they must be very sure that they are right before they break with the traditions which rest upon the hitherto universal experience of mankind.

Where any body of religious people have attempted to carry on the religious life without organization, as, for example, the Society of Friends, we find that almost inevitably a whole new series of conventions and traditions grow up, and these are not necessarily any more spiritual or edifying than those which they have superseded. I believe that all people who are really deeply possessed with the spirit of religion will be driven to associate themselves together by some external bond, and that this external bond will itself be of the nature of a church.

There are some who think that what we need is a *new* church which shall set itself free from all the entanglements of the past, without dogmas, without ceremonies, without regulations—except those which shall be agreed upon by the men who come into the new church from outside. Now the experience of starting new churches is not a happy one. The history of religion is strewn with the ruins and rubbish-heaps of churches which in their time have been new. It is not at all an original idea. In every past age there have been people who have tried to found a church which was to consist entirely of pure and spiritually-minded people, and from which all half-hearted people were to be rigorously excluded. Such of

these churches as still remain are the homes of the most narrow-minded and most bigoted religionists in the whole world. No experience has been more unfortunate than this attempt to start new and select churches consisting entirely of the very good.

Is it not then wise for us to start from our membership in the particular church in which we find ourselves? It may, of course, be that some intellectual requirement is made a necessity of membership which we cannot possibly accept; in that case we must, of course, be true to our conscience, and listen to God rather than to man. In most continental countries thoughtful people are obliged to choose between belonging to a church which does violence to their conscience and intellect, or ceasing from church membership altogether. In our own country these alternatives rarely present themselves. In the Church of England, and in many of the Free Churches, a very wide liberty is given to the individual conscience. Generally speaking, people who are really in earnest can find great opportunities of work within already existing organizations. It is true that there is very much to discourage people. Church buildings have, within the last fifty years, been crammed full of unsightly and very hideous ornaments which would not be tolerated in the houses of any people who care for what is beautiful.

Machine-made brass crosses and candlesticks, alabaster pulpits, hideous stained-glass windows, seats extremely uncomfortable to sit upon, books more mouldy and dilapidated than any that are to be found in any private house, buildings so badly ventilated that it is difficult to think or worship in them, music of the very worst period of Victorian art, sermons which very often show no knowledge of, or sympathy with, the elementary postulates of modern science—all these things are very real discouragements to people who really do desire to express their loyalty to the Kingdom of Heaven by genuine membership in a visible church.

I would ask all these people to remember that the deplorable state of things too often found in churches is largely due to the silent withdrawal of all the more intelligent and sincere seekers after truth. If these people, instead of withdrawing themselves, were to exercise the very considerable power which they now have to alter what is bad and to strengthen what is good in the church, a reformation might take place far more quickly than we are apt to suppose. So long as a clergyman has to choose between a number of obscurantist members of a congregation who attend regularly, and an equal number of thoughtful and intelligent people who consistently stay away, he will be a very brave

man if he does not come to rely upon those who support him rather than upon those who criticize him without trying to help.

There is in the church of to-day a very genuine desire for the help and advice of those who care for the modern outlook and believe that God has a message to give through it. I have the deepest sympathy with these people when they say that they cannot be expected to come to the ordinary services as they are now generally conducted, but they can at least come to a plain and simple Communion service, and, after all, nothing more than that is required for membership in the church. Where a great multitude of bad tunes and bad sermons are fired off at a congregation every Sunday, there is no reason at all why the most devout Christian should unite himself with these particular devotions. Roman Catholics very wisely realize that a taste for sermons and for hymn-singing has no necessary connection with religion; a man may go to the Holy Communion and may work hard in the social work of the church, and he may keep away from the music and the preaching until it has been reformed, except for the occasional attendance which charity and good-fellowship would suggest. He should also remember, if he has had greater advantages than the majority of

his fellow-men have had, that he can scarcely expect that the teaching and the music of his village church will always be of a kind to help him. He will be wise to take advantage of those retreats and conferences which are now available in such abundant measure in connection with the many societies for the promotion of good works of all kinds, and try to bring back from these conferences some strength and enlightenment which may help his neighbours, instead of always expecting that he himself is to be helped and comforted.

If we insist on staying outside the organization of the visible church, anything which is good which we may have to contribute is likely to end with us; the wine will be spilled for want of a bottle to put it in, and we ourselves are very likely to grow narrow and self-conceited. If, on the other hand, we have the humility to believe that we have very much to receive from, as well as something to give to, ordinary simple Christians, we shall come humbly to learn from the great age-long traditions of the visible church, and, while we make our contribution towards the modernizing of those traditions which, unless they are kept fluid will crystallize into barriers keeping out the Kingdom of God, we shall also ourselves grow in richness and quietness of spirit, through our participation in the Life

which has come down to us from God's saints in the days that are gone by, the inestimable treasure for the sake of which we are wise to sell all we have, and to buy that very commonplace field in which the treasure lies hid.

VII

PRAYER

PRAYER has been defined as "the ascent of the mind into God." There is probably no better definition of what is meant, or ought to be meant, by Christian Prayer. And if we realize that this act of the mind by which we climb up, as it were, out of our own little world and view all our life from the standpoint of God's purpose for the world, is the true idea of prayer, then some of the common objections to prayer, as an irrational or otiose practice, disappear. Let us consider at once some of these objections.

People, for instance, are wont to say that God must know best what is good for us, and that it is useless for us to inform God of the things which we should recommend Him to do, or to leave undone. But this is not the object of prayer. Prayer does, it is true, include the laying of our plans, our desires, our wants before God, and this is an important element in prayer, but not with the idea that God

needs information, or that He should conform His actions to our desires, but with the object of seeing how our desires will look, how they will be modified, and even, perhaps, altogether abandoned, when seen from the higher standpoint of the Divine purpose for the world and ourselves.

The true father of a family thinks what he desires in the way of amusement or comfort for himself, but, in so far as he is a good father, he immediately looks at all these gratifications and plans from the point of view of the needs of the family as a whole, and rearranges his plans from this larger and less selfish standpoint. The true patriot, after he has settled his plans as he would wish them to be from his family point of view, proceeds to look at them again from the wider view of the nation, and tries to rearrange his life with the needs of the nation as a whole in view. So prayer does, it is true, include " making our wants known to God," and it is very important that no desires, however trivial, should be left out when we bring ourselves into the presence of God, but not with the view of gaining some private advantage for ourselves, or deflecting God's purposes with a view to our own particular ends, but with the desire of having our own views modified and enlarged by seeing life from a standpoint higher than our own.

Again, people object against prayer that God's purposes will undoubtedly be carried out whether we interfere or not, and it is therefore futile and even impious to suppose that we can modify or hasten the august march of the universe. But all science teaches us that progress towards the world's final purpose comes from the tentative experiments of the creatures. We may wonder why this should be, and why the creatures are allowed to retard the ultimate purposes of life by their continual mistakes and unsuccessful experiments, but so it is. God does, as a matter of fact, make His plans dependent upon the measure of co-operation which His creatures afford.

But this progress by way of blind experiment is not the only way of progress. We have now arrived at a stage in the development of life in which we can not only blindly grope and experiment after the divine ideals of life ; we can, at least to a considerable degree, *see* whither we are intended to go, and deliberately shape our course thither, and we can save ourselves from the pain and loss of false experiments by deliberate search for the right road, and by setting ourselves definitely to block the wrong paths which lead either nowhere at all, or else to immediate perdition. So, whatever we may suppose *ought* to be the case, in actual fact the pur-

poses which we can discern towards the good can undoubtedly be hastened or retarded according to the measure and the intelligence of our co-operation. It is, therefore, neither blasphemous nor merely useless to spend time and care in trying to enter into an understanding of, and co-operation with, the Divine purpose of the world; our doing so does actually hasten the coming of good, and does thus actually modify the course of events.

Is prayer necessarily connected with the formal practice known as "saying our prayers"? There is a widely-prevalent feeling in these days that there is no need for any formal life of religious exercises. People think they can be religious without putting aside any times or places for the exercise of religion. No greater change has come over our English race than the almost universal abstention from all formal acts of prayer, which is not by any means confined to the careless, but is almost equally marked among people who are serious and earnest. Never before in the history of our race have so many good people absented themselves from religious ordinances and even from the exercise of private formal devotions. The reasons given for this abstention are many. There is the very common one that the actual forms used in public worship are antiquated, and express a form of religion which we have largely outgrown.

There is much truth in this plea. Religion has consisted to a considerable extent in the past in deprecating the wrath of God, in placing the person of Jesus between our sins and their reward, and imploring God to lay aside His anger and punishments, which we confess to be our due, for the sake of Christ's Passion and merits. There is, we all now feel, something peculiarly degrading in such a conception of a heavenly Father, and in the attitude of sons who approach their angry father, hiding, as it were, behind the person of their elder brother because they dare not approach the father directly. Such a conception of worship is degrading both to the worshipper and to the object of our worship, and undoubtedly this abject, fawning and deprecating attitude does colour a large part of our forms of public worship and make them distasteful, not only to those who have too little sense of shortcoming, but to those also who know they have deeply sinned, and yet feel that they can trust their Father to understand them, and need no assurance of His unending love and forgiveness. It is true, indeed, that only through the spirit and filial faith which was in Jesus can we learn to know our heavenly Father—"no one cometh unto the Father but by me"; but this is a very different idea from that of sheltering behind Jesus because

we are afraid of our Father's wrath, and this is the evil idea which still pervades many of our prayers and hymns.

Then some people—some who are most in earnest—feel that the great issues of life are evaded in our forms of public worship; that our formularies are not true to what we know of historical fact. Other people feel that aesthetically our services represent false and meretricious ideals of beauty, both in music and in colour, ideals which are not tolerated among self-respecting people in ordinary life. Here, again, we have a charge which is undoubtedly more or less true. It is difficult for people who are sensitively alive to truth in statement of facts, or to the expression of beauty in their ordinary life, and who rightly feel that religion consists partly in absolute loyalty to such standards of truth and beauty as we possess, to worship habitually where they hear what is false, or feel that there is constant suppression of what is true, and where what they feel to be the best available standards of beauty are habitually flouted or ignored. We may therefore plead in excuse of those who have given up the formal exercise of public worship that the church is verily guilty in having made public worship so difficult, not only for the less seriously-minded people, but especially for those who care most for

those great values of human life of which religious worship ought to be the highest expression. This would not be so serious a matter if we believed that religion and a life of prayer could easily continue without its times of formal and corporate expression ; but history does not teach us so far that the religious sense can survive for long its loss of formal expression, and it seems unlikely that we are to be guided in the future to find a deep sense of religion existing with no need of religious cultus.

In what does a prayerful life consist ? How would it show itself in actual practice ? Can we analyse at all the various departments of prayer ? Though in practice a life of prayer—a life, that is, of perpetual reference of all the activities of life to ultimate standards—cannot be precisely subdivided into accurate divisions, we can more or less clearly discern certain broad aspects of the life of prayer. It will include :

(1) *Adoration*—a fixing of the mind upon the thought of God, and a reverent sensing or tasting of His Presence, feeling deliberately the impact of God upon our soul, and giving time to the reverent waiting of the soul upon God's self-revelation. We may compare this adoration of God to the artist's activity in sensing the beauty of the world, or the scientist's intense fixing of his mind upon the

rationality of Nature, the certainty that a solution of all problems is discoverable, which must precede all successful experiment. It is the intense feeling of the majesty of God's Real Presence in the universe and in the course of our own lives, and the abasement of our own pride and egotism in the experience of that heavenly contemplation.

(2) This will lead to *Praise*, which does not mean a flattering of God by heaping up epithets, or the ignoring of all the difficulties in creation, or the emphasizing of all those aspects of life which happen to be favourable to ourselves—an attempt to show that God's activities are always attuned to our own private views of life. Praise of God is a dwelling with joy and contentment upon the ultimate triumph of goodness and truth and beauty, which already we dimly discern in the life of Jesus, and those who have shared His Spirit, and which by faith we grasp as the certain outcome of the future, that Divine Word of hope which we feel to be implanted in our own understanding even now. The elimination or curtailment of praise from the life of the spirit has effects comparable to the loss of some essential constituent of diet to the body. It immeasurably impoverishes the spiritual life, and depletes the energy which prayer in its fulness should bring to the soul.

(3) In proportion as we see the grandeur of the destiny of the world, and the majestic advance of God's purposes, we shall feel the need of *Confession*. The sense of unworthiness is not equally felt by everyone. It cannot be manufactured; when it is artificially stimulated it is very unpleasant; but it ought to be a normal experience of the soul whenever it is brought face to face with the perfection of beauty in the work of creation and grace. No one can be a great artist, or a great athlete, who does not feel acutely the sense of his own inability to express in action what he knows of truth: and no one can really have lived habitually with God and not feel a sense of his own unworthiness, and of his actual, and often deliberate, misdeeds. A religion which does not make provision for Confession cannot permanently satisfy the needs of man.

(4) *Petition*. If we are conversing with God, we cannot but put before God our actual wants. There is a great danger of unreality in religion if we leave outside of our prayers our ordinary insistent wants and desires. We can very easily go on lusting after things of small value, or indulging in mean envy and spite, or being harassed by continuous petty anxiety, while we fill our prayers with high aspirations which become increasingly

unreal as we leave out the things which do, in fact, actually preoccupy our lives. How often do religious people indulge habitually in fantastic misstatements about people of another class, or creed, or nation; how often do they feed themselves on unchristian daily papers, on a diet of murders and divorces and international bitterness, and all the while they believe that their deepest interest is centred in the Eucharist or in Foreign Missions. If they were actually putting into their prayers what they habitually felt, and were praying "Give me this day my daily murder, or divorce case," or "Give me twenty per cent. on my speculative shares," they would tend towards a life of reality and integrity which is impossible while they keep out of their prayer their daily anxieties and desires and lusts.

(5) And Petition will lead us naturally to *Intercession*, which means the placing of those we love in the light of God's purpose, so that we may be able to steep our own thought for them in the thought which God has for them, so that we may be used ourselves for the furtherance of God's purpose for those for whom we pray. We are habitually influencing others by our thoughts. By our thinking we create an atmosphere round those among whom we live. A great newspaper, which represents a great number of minds working in concert,

powerfully alters and controls the thought-life of large numbers of people, and in so doing controls their actions : we, each in our small sphere, do the like for those we know ; and by joining together we create centres of thought and activity. By so doing we may hasten or retard the development of God's plan of their lives. But this is not necessarily prayer. Prayer is not the same as wishing well to people. In intercessory prayer we endeavour to make God's plan, and not our own plan, available for those for whom we pray. In intercession—for our country, or for the world, or for an individual—we try to grasp God's vision for those who are the subject of our prayer—and make that vision so clear by our communing with God that our thought for them may be God's thought, our strength the channel of His purposes, so that by our instrumentality God's good plan for them and His Grace may become an habitual part of their lives.

To do so great a thing for others cannot be a light concern, and unless we are careful and sincere may easily become a pernicious thing, for we may be trying to impress our own personality, or the pattern of some party or sect, upon those for whom we profess to pray, instead of bringing God's purpose, and the impress of His character, into their lives. But if we care for others at all, we cannot do

them a greater service, one more useful to them, or more expensive in time and energy to ourselves, than to hold them in prayer before God, and such an activity does actually modify and change the course of their lives.

(6) And finally, *Thanksgiving* will form a part of prayer. It is the part of prayer most easily forgotten. It is always more easy to remember our misfortunes than our blessings. In thanksgiving we should, if we are wise, not be egocentric—we should not let our thanksgiving hinge upon our own doings. We should dwell in thanksgiving upon the beauty of Nature, upon wild flowers, and the gaiety of animals and birds, upon the great men and women of history—not only the serious people, but the merry people who have given laughter and song to the world—we should think of the great strength of the beasts, and the cleverness of insects, and the almost constant happiness of Nature, in which disease is almost wholly absent, and anxiety almost entirely unknown. We should think of the gallantry and fun which lives on, and wells up to the surface, in the slums, and the monotonous life of the bush, of the continual assertiveness of progress in spite of the perpetual backwash of tradition and all the disappointment which follows upon unsuccessful experiments in living. We should think of evil

perpetually destroying itself, of life asserting itself amidst every possible discouragement. Thanksgiving which leaves out the difficulties and discouragements and failures of life is not of great value. It must not mean a retreat into a region of phantasy where evil is ignored. It must take full account of all that is baffling and not leave it out, or minimize it; and yet learn to see that it is very meet, right and our bounden duty at *all* times and in *all* places to give thanks, because heaven and earth are full of the glory of God.

Prayer sounds so difficult and so complicated that people are apt to give it up, and feel that they have neither time nor energy to make even a beginning. But if we realize how delightful it is, that you can do it in a 'bus, or in a tube, or in your bed, that you can do a little of it, if you can't do much, that it is like talking to the most delightful friend, and thus does not necessarily involve perpetual formalities and efforts, that it rests you, and need not tire you more than all healthy exercise tires you, that it lessens, and does not add to, the burdens of life, then, I think, people would try to begin it, making little humble experiments, tasting the pleasure of getting to know God as their friend, and finally coming to see that He is the friend discerned in all friendships, until some day all our

activities might be mingled with prayer, and our life saturated with the happy enjoyment of its exercise.

Probably most people will find—so alien from intercourse with the Divine is the fellowship with this world as we know it—that it is necessary, in order to acquire the habit of living always in fellowship with God, which is the Life of Prayer, to have set periods of prayer, in which the world's point of view is rigidly excluded. There is at the moment, as we have seen, a revolt against formal prayers, but if we want to return to a life lived continually in the beauty of goodness, I see not how it can be achieved except we go back to some greater carefulness in making special times in which we can "go into our chamber, and having shut the door, pray to our Father, who seeth in secret." We must, I think, from time to time, shut the door, shut out the laudable interests of daily life, the news, the love-making, the business, the games, as well as the gloomy cares, so that we may exercise ourselves in the spiritual life.

People to-day who have given up "prayers," spend five or ten minutes a day in kicking out their legs, and turning their necks, and touching their toes with their fingers, to gain bodily suppleness—an admirable desire: but surely we may say to

these folk " These things should ye have done, and not leave the other undone." " If you fear to get stiff in the joints, and rheumatic, or pot-bellied, and for fear of such a fate find it necessary to direct all your attention to that one thing, at one stated time, do you not also fear that your soul also may grow stiff, and lose its quick intuition of spiritual beauty, and so grow ugly and obese ? Was it wise to give up those few minutes of spiritual exercises ? We do not suppose that those brief formal exercises in prayer were any substitute for the habitual dwelling in the sanctuary of God, the constant communing with goodness, but were they not a substantial aid, perhaps an indispensable aid, to the habit of recollectedness, of living on those serene heights where no unloveliness can hurt us, and no fear appal us ? " So to live habitually is prayer : to lead others thither is intercessory prayer : and a life of prayer is to live in that divine air, so that we become so inured to it that it becomes our natural home, to which we return with immense relief and joy whenever we have been parted from it by the claims of this world or the feebleness of our wayward minds.

Prayer then is surely the most rational, and beautiful, and satisfying exercise of our nature. We shall try to learn to practise it as we work, as

we move about, as we play, as we love, as we rest. It will not make us unnatural, but more quick and efficient and ready than we should otherwise be, more ready to discern beauty and truth, and loveliness, kinder to others and more interested in them, more patriotic, and, above all, more full of that which has been said to be one of the greatest gifts of the Holy Spirit—common sense, that most uncommon of all endowments of the soul.

So, to be an expert in praying is to be a real expert in living beautifully, in living the Divine Life in the midst of this world in which the Divine is so difficult to discern and so hard to hold, even when, for a moment, we feel that we have caught a glimpse of it; that Kingdom of Heaven which we so greatly long for, and for which we know that we were created—our true home.

VIII

SALVATION

NO word in the range of religion has become so debased as that of "Salvation." It is in itself an honourable word and represents a noble idea, but so low has it fallen that people may well doubt whether it can be indeed revived, or whether it might not be well to let it die, and substitute some other name to denote the idea we mean to convey.

In the New Testament the word signifying salvation is the same as that used for health. To be "saved" is the same as to be healthy. It meant to be "whole," to be in perfect harmony with our environment, to have attained our ideal, and this not in one department only of our lives, but in life as a whole. The Hebrew word used had originally meant "broad" or "spacious." And with this idea of wholeness and sanity went the corresponding idea of being *rescued* from a great peril, the peril of losing one's soul, of being permanently *un*healthy

and out of relationship with one's environment, of living cramped and deformed in the darkness, a darkness which in the end might mean the destruction of the soul altogether. So deeply did men feel this need of *rescue*, rescue from an imminent danger of utter destruction and damnation, that the idea of salvation has tended to lose its positive sense of a broad and spacious and dignified life to be attained, and has tended to imply simply the idea of being let off the penalties which attach to the loss of the soul's health. So deeply did men feel the sickness and disease of the natural life that there rapidly grew in the early days of Christianity the idea that men all merited, and would certainly justly suffer, the tortures of hell, but that it was possible by submission to the claims of Jesus as the Saviour to secure an amnesty from God which would carry with it a free right of entrance into eternal bliss. People were not very seriously interested in the teaching, or the moral outlook, of Jesus: they regarded Him chiefly as the rescuer who, in return for subscribing to certain terms, would give them, like the entourage of an ambassador, freedom from the danger of imprisonment for debt, and the right of free passage to Heaven.

This debased idea of salvation is by no means dead to-day. It takes two chief forms, roughly to

be defined as perversions of the Catholic and Protestant types of religion. The Catholic form of this popular misconception of salvation is that if one is baptized, and submits to the external demands of the Church, which need only include the very barest moral content (in Pascal's time it was argued that an Act of Love to God once a year or once a month, or a desire expressed once a year to avoid stealing or adultery might be enough, if accompanied by regular resort to Absolution, to secure salvation) one will be, after perhaps a long period of purification, absolutely certain of eternal salvation, but if one died in mortal sin, or had not been baptized, there was no hope at all, in spite of a well-lived life, of eternal salvation, but a certainty of eternal torment in hell.

The Protestant travesty of salvation was even more immoral: it taught (and, indeed, in some circles it is still being taught) that no one could attain salvation unless he had undergone a psychical experience called "Conversion," and that those, however good they might be, who were not conscious of this change had no hope of eternal life unless this change occurred. This external change might often be compatible with extremely disagreeable and unethical conduct, and with gross intellectual blindness. (Quite recently a vicar demanded of

all his Sunday School teachers that they should be able to say that they had been converted, and undertake to abjure the theatre, dancing, the cinema and whist drives. The penalty for refusal, which they all incurred, was dismissal.)

The type of character evolved by both these popular distortions of a really great idea has been so horribly unethical and aesthetically hideous that no one can be surprised at a new generation revolting from the whole idea. We actively dislike the picture called up in our own minds by the idea of " the saved man," or " the strict Catholic," or " the staunch Churchwoman." We see these worthies with our mind's eye, and flee away.

Yet it would be foolish to refuse to realize that all great ideas are bound to suffer popular perversions of this kind, or to treat with contempt the ideas which have been thus perverted. We are ourselves continually debasing great ideas, and reducing them to the tabloid form which enables our enfeebled spiritual digestion to assimilate them. " Ethical Societies " and " Higher Thought " centres are liable to exactly the same kind of degradation. It is our wisdom to accept humbly the truth which these perversions have sprung from, and we shall be fortunate if we are able to see the truth even a little more clearly, and under rather truer

figures and symbols, than those used by the people whose efforts we quite truly realize to have miscarried.

Let us, then, accept the fact that we all need urgently to be saved; and that we are all in imminent danger of losing our souls altogether.

We have within us the surge of tremendous passions which are in themselves the raw material of the highest achievements, but which have so far in the history of the race been useful for only very lowly and unethical uses. We feel strongly within us the desire to revert to this animal state; this state which was, in its origin, a state of innocence, but which, when we try to revert to it, after having known "the law," becomes to us a state of active sin.

The strong desire to hunt, to snare, to kill, and possess for our own appetite, all that we see which is desirable was, for our remote ancestors, not only excusable, it was the only way of existing at all. This urgent desire still works within us, and is the motive of war and civil strife to-day. Yet without this intense desire to seize and possess we should scarcely be human at all. The child whose acquisitive instinct has been repressed, who has been urged, perhaps in the interest of religion, to have no wants, and to try to be perfectly "self-less," be-

comes either a neurasthenic or else a mere cypher, a person who can only gain value at all from the activities of others. We need not fewer, but more, pugnacious people in the world. All great human causes are suffering from the lack of fighters.

So, if we take another quite primitive instinct, that of self-preservation, which made the primitive man immediately re-act towards any dangers by flight or taking cover, we realize that this instinct of fear is in itself good, and necessary for the preservation of life. Yet if it is uncritically used, as a mere intuition, after the manner of primitive man, if we take cover instinctively whenever we see danger, if we always run to earth whenever we hear a new idea in religion or politics, if we adopt the policy of " safety first " and make that our motto in life, then we are incapable of a noble and ethical life, because the highest life involves the taking of perpetual risks, it involves the readiness to offer our bodies, and our health, and our worldly prospects, where an adequate end is to be attained by the sacrifice. Yet here again we must realize that self-protection, and the fear which springs from it, are not emotions which can safely be neglected. " Safety first " is no bad motto if we realize what safety or " salvation " really means. To lose one's *self* is the one irretrievable loss :

to be without a self is to have lost the whole purpose of life. It is not ignoble to take pains to save one's life, if one has an adequate conception of what life involves, that it is not mainly concerned with this earthly life, or with the safety of that physical instrument which we call our body, but with the life of the soul, and with spiritual values which transcend the categories of time and space. "What must I do to be saved?" is no ignoble cry if we understand what "being saved" means, that it means being "spiritually sound and healthy"; nor is it a good sign when people say they have no fear at all in life, and cannot believe that there is any danger of their losing their souls. Jesus Christ certainly taught that the peril of losing one's soul was very great and imminent, and that—even if it were possible to find it ultimately—the consequences of losing it in this world continue into the next life, and that this is the greatest of all losses, and the fear of it the most rational of all fears.

The tendency of our own day is for people to have no great interest in working out their salvation, and no particular fear consequently of losing their souls. They suppose that they will progress automatically, and that by giving way to all natural emotions we shall lead the most satisfactory kind of life. In the reaction against the tendency to

repress emotion they have come to believe that nothing should be repressed: that we should just drift, and believe that drifting is the safest way of attaining to the unknown port for which we are bound.

Now Christ's "good news" was certainly not —whatever else it was—the news that you could drift into heaven by following the path of least resistance. Most certainly He taught that the way was narrow and very steep, and difficult to find, and not easy to walk in even when it was found. It might involve the temporary mutilation of the body in the interests of the higher values of life. God does not come to us with the message, "Follow your inclinations and all will be well." Christ's whole teaching is that if you want to escape an imminent peril of destruction you must bend all your energies to find, and enter into, the Kingdom of Heaven, and that you certainly won't find it easily, or keep in it, even when you have found it. God comes to us, according to the teaching of Jesus, as a leader calling for recruits to fight in a great war to the death, a war in which it is quite impossible to be neutral. We may dislike the form of the question put to those who wished to enter the Methodist societies: "Do you desire to flee from the wrath to come?" It seems to us to

imply an inadequate view of God's relation to us and of the process involved in salvation; but it is nearer to the teaching of Christ than the "good news" that the following of our emotions will drift us into heaven.

There is another doctrine of salvation which comes to us from America, a doctrine which assures us that if only we say "I am happy," "I am good," "I am rich," "I am beautiful," and even "I am God," we shall find that all this comes true, provided we say it often enough, and don't think about it while we are saying it. Many thousands of persons are practising this kind of religion at the present day. It contains no doubt a real truth—that if we set our minds to the contemplation of the highest things, these things will tend to become a true part of our life. But there is a real danger of a most desolating folly overtaking those who practise this kind of religion. It is possible to go on saying all these things, and believing implicitly that they *have* come true, that we *are* good, and beautiful, and rich, and God-like, when everyone else can see very clearly that this is very far from being true. The Church of Laodicaea, an early exponent of this modern habit in religion, kept on repeating, "I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing," but the trouble was that it did not

know that all the time it was wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. The first step towards salvation is confession : confession, indeed, that we *are* the children of God, but confession also that we have sinned, and are no more worthy to be accounted sons. The first step towards a real salvation is the realization that we have a very long and painful journey to attain to it. No form of religion can become so noxious as that which teaches us to say, " I am perfect," instead of " Ye shall be perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect." It is perhaps the peculiar danger of this whole outlook on life, which had its origin in American religious movements, to believe that the assertion of loud-sounding principles will form a substitute for patient endeavour, or that the assumption of great academical titles will be a substitute for the acquirement of learning. It is through much tribulation that we have to enter into the Kingdom of God.

To be saved is, then, the hardest and most arduous business in life. It is the attainment of complete harmony with God. It may involve a temporary mutilation or repression of the lesser values of life; of physical health, for instance, or intellectual culture. But it has been a mistake of religion to suppose that the repression of the mind

or the body is a *necessary* condition of spiritual advancement, or even generally advantageous to it. Too often religious people have believed and taught that a diseased or enfeebled condition of body was a gain to the soul, or that a suicide of the mind aided the advance of the spirit. This great mistake has led to the divorce of religion, education and medicine. We have come to think that you can be healthy but not religious; educated, but not spiritually-minded. Perhaps this divorce has been temporarily inevitable. Perhaps medicine and education could not have grown up under the shadow of religion, as it was too narrowly conceived. We shall, however, in the future, come to see that, in the interest of religion itself, for the attainment of salvation in its highest conception, we must have an alliance between those who care for the body, and the mind, and the spirit. Those who have cultivated and not abused the body, those who have really educated their minds to a critical and jealous loyalty to truth, will be those who will most willingly offer these healthy bodies and minds to the service of the Kingdom of Heaven.

"It is a question," says Dr. Rivers, "whether increasing specialization is characteristic of evolution throughout, or whether it is not rather a necessary feature—I should like to call it a

necessary evil feature—of the middle stages of evolution."

"If medicine is to hold its own on certain aspects of disease which should come properly within its sphere, it must find that it has much to learn from the priest, if indeed some kind of collaboration between the two is not often desirable."

"No treatment of the subject of mind and medicine would be complete which ignores religion. One of the most striking results of the modern developments of our knowledge concerning the influence of mental factors in disease is that they are bringing back medicine in some measure to that co-operation with religion which existed in the early stages of human progress."

We are going in the future to have a far nobler and comprehensive ideal of salvation than we have ever had in the past. It will be an ideal which will include deliverance not only from moral disorders, but from such disorders of the mind as intolerance, superstition, and the imbecilities of pietistic religion. Christ is coming again; and His new Coming is the coming of ordered science, in which the mind comprehends with reason what the heart with enthusiasm conceives. There will be a religion in which the mind is set at liberty, and a science in which the emotions are not despised. This new

dawn of religion is already apparent to those who are eagerly awaiting it. To those who dread its appearance it will come like a thief in the night, and their temples and their sacrifices will perish, and not one stone will be left on another, because they knew not the day of their visitation.

The time is coming near when a full salvation will be discerned to be that which brings health to the body, sanity to the mind, and love and the spirit of revelation to the soul, and we shall see that no true religion can be opposed to a real love for Truth, and no permanent health of body maintained without the love of goodness. "The strong man," Napoleon is reported to have said, "is at one and the same time reason and movement. He wills with impetuosity what he has conceived with deep reflection, and his heroism is all of a single piece."

It is this salvation which *integrates* us, which sets both our head and our heart and our body at perfect liberty, and to a perfect harmony of co-operation, which will be the aim of the religion of the new days, and though many temples may fall and many priesthoods find their altars deserted, we shall by this new coming of the spirit be led to see Christ anew, and the old values will re-emerge from the clouds of paganism which have hidden them for so long.

IX

PASSION AND LOVE

WHAT is the relation between Passion and Love?

They certainly are not identical. Sexual passion has, indeed, been one of the most potent causes of progressive evolution in nature. It seems to have been implanted in order to incite the creatures to an over-mastering desire for the continuance of the race, and to give to parenthood a tender and self-sacrificing power. If the union of the sexes had not been made a matter of passionate desire, it would appear that not only would the continuance of life as we know it have been precarious, but life would have been deprived of much—perhaps all—of the beauty—music, colouring, poetry—which has had its lowly origin in the desire to enhance the attraction of sexual passion. So much has this been the case that many modern psychologists have taught us that *all* poetry, *all* love, *all* beauty of music and colour are sexual in origin,

and can only persist where they are intimately connected with sexual desire.

Those who would have us thus regard Love and Beauty as only more highly complex forms of sexual desire are those who think that you can give a sufficient account of any highly complex structure by referring it back to its simplest original expression, and say that the highly complex structure is "caused" by the simple and crude phenomenon out of which it would appear to have originated. They forget that the wonderful thing, which is not accounted for, is the persistent tendency of the crude and unevolved structure to develop out of such simple elements the highly complicated and intricately beautiful and purposeful structure which we know. Simple sexual attraction does indeed seem to have developed beauty for its own purposes, but the wonderful thing is that, when beauty has once been developed, it persists, and evolves, and becomes more and more independent of the crude sexual experiences in which it had its possible origin. If it be true that birds originally learned to sing in order to enhance their sexual attractions (and this is by no means certain), if flowers developed colour as a means of ensuring fertilization, it remains a wonderful thing that birds sing, as the ordinary canary sings, and the parrot talks, when there is

no sexual motive apparent, and the flowers develop scent and form, and colour, when they depend on bulbs, and not on the visits of bees, for their reproduction. Insects and animals, when once they have attained to a life tolerably free from constant fear and strife, develop aesthetic faculties and put on gay clothing from no observable motive of necessity, but out of sheer joy in beauty.

And when we get to human beings, it is quite certain that the delight in music and in beauty generally, delight in truth, delight in goodness, has now, whatever might have been the case in remote ages, no apparent sexual motive. We do not love music, or poetry, or honesty, in order to increase sexual attraction. The higher moral and aesthetic faculties of man do have, no doubt, a simple necessary physical basis, if they are to be manifested on this earth. You cannot enjoy a concert without having a meal some time within a reasonable distance of time from the concert; you cannot read a book unless the temperature is kept above zero and below boiling-point; and similarly, it is true that the sexual passion, or perhaps we should say the same passion which finds its crudest expression in simple sexuality, is a necessary groundwork for most normal people for the enjoyment of beauty and the practice of

morals, but this does not mean that the breakfast *produces* music, or the moderate temperature *produces* literature, or that sexual passion *produces* art. These physical and psychical states are the necessary raw material for the manifestation of these higher moral states, but their presence does not necessarily produce them, and they do not automatically spring from these simple necessities of physical life.

Sexual passion, religion teaches us, has in it nothing which is bad, nothing which is, in itself, in the least shameful. Like eating and drinking, it is a natural and laudable activity, to be enjoyed within its own sphere. The lack of the power to enjoy sexual passion is often a sign of degeneracy or disease, just as is the lack of power to enjoy food. Those who are most likely to be useful to mankind are those who are normally constituted to enjoy passionate expression. It is probably true that a person deprived of the physical possibility of expressing sexual passion would also be incapable of creative artistic achievement. The church has always gravely censured those who have deliberately deprived themselves of the organs of sex out of a mistaken idea that this would ensure " purity," by escaping conflict. A man deprived of the organs of sex could not enter the priesthood. It is not

perhaps true to say that sexual desire stands on exactly the same basis as food and warmth, because those who are totally without it can live a more or less normal life and do useful service to humanity, whereas those who could not eat or could not secure adequate warmth would quickly perish; but it is in itself, if not a necessity, at least a valuable and honourable desire, and its possession is normally necessary for a healthy life.

No doubt sexual desire can, like other desires, be so perverted as to be a grave hindrance to moral development, just as an abnormal desire for food, or a perverted taste in literature, can do great harm to those who enjoy food or enjoy reading. Sex does not automatically lead to love or beauty, much less is it true that it *is* in itself love or beauty. It may be an extremely ugly and an extremely immoral exhibition of perverted human activity. In a purely animal state it is in itself often beautiful; when we pass out of the animal state it only remains beautiful where, having become conscious, it is then deliberately subordinated to higher ends, and is brought into the service of Love.

Love is not the same thing as Passion. Love is the deliberate uniting of our own highest nature—our moral, intellectual and aesthetic faculties—with the highest faculties of others, and with that unseen

Source of our own natures which we call God. Love can be experienced by human beings quite apart from sexual passion. The Love of God may, indeed, lead people to renounce sexual passion altogether and to cease to be interested in it. The love of art often requires and obtains the highest measure of asceticism in its votaries. Crude sexual *motifs* are indeed destructive of art, as they are destructive of religion. Religions in which sex enters, as a predominant conscious or unconscious motive, soon become nauseous.

Yet Love does use up an immense amount of sexual passion. It demands it as an engine demands fuel. It takes it, and by burning it, it transforms it into higher kinds of energy. It uses it as it uses food, and in using it so transforms it that it is not recognizable as sexual passion at all. When the modern psychologist says that all noble achievement is nothing but a sublimation of sexual desire, it would be more true to say that it is the expression of that innate desire for perfection of being, which in the lower creation is necessarily confined to sexual well-being, since the constant stress and struggle in the humble forms of life gives no opportunity for any other form of self-expression. So soon as that limitation is removed, we see that the desire for perfection of self-expression ceases to

be confined to mere sexual passion, and music, and colour, and morality, and adoration, all burgeon forth and become ends in themselves, while sexual desire retires to a place in life, still honourable and necessary, and in itself desirable, but subordinate now to the demands of morality, of truth, and of pure beauty.

The religious person, then, will not be one who is deficient in sexual desire, for this desire is part of the normal make-up of a healthy human being. Yet, if crude sexual passion forms a predominant interest in life, so that morality and beauty become mere appendages to a physical passion, then that person shows a regression to a more primitive and undifferentiated type, and is on a par with the feeble-minded person. The energy of self-expression (which the Freudian psychologist calls *libido*) ought by now to have outgrown its cruder expressions in so far that they are subordinated, as eating and drinking are subordinated, to the higher demands of life.

The exercise of Love is not, therefore, necessarily dependent upon sexual passion, though it may use this, as well as other physical desires, for the material expression of Love. Some of the greatest lovers have been those who have either quite deliberately set aside sexual passion in order to give

more intense expression to their love, either in art or in deeds which demanded a high degree of asceticism, or they have unconsciously allowed sex to grow less and less dominant as a motive, until it has faded quietly into the background of life.

Many of the finest characters remain tormented by unsatisfied sexual desire. This is very often because they have been denied, in our rather mechanical conditions of life, any form of artistic self-expression. In the last generation, the person who loved colour painted or sketched, and so expressed his daily experience; if he loved music, he played or sang; if he loved words, he wrote verses. To-day we take snapshots, and set a gramophone to work, or listen to the wireless, and we are too lazy to express our feelings, or think them not worth expressing. Few people can now even write a decent letter. In this absence of avenues of self-expression, crude animal lusts, healthy in themselves, become unduly dominant, or even tyrannical to the verge of mania or imbecility.

The idea very common among religious people that to enjoy sex is wrong, or at least shameful, has no basis in good sense. It ought, in the absence of any strong call to a still higher service which excludes it, to be enjoyed within due limits. Nor does there seem to be any reason why it should be

necessarily confined to the production of children. Until very recent times, the parents who wished to leave a very small family behind them were wise in producing a score or two of children, out of whom three-quarters would be destroyed by disease or accidents. To-day there is every hope that out of four children, three at least will grow up to adult life. The person who produces twenty is now a nuisance. He embarrasses gravely the social situation, and makes life by so much harder for himself and his neighbours. If any means can be found whereby these parents can enjoy a reasonable degree of sexual relationship, without burdening themselves and their neighbours with unneeded children, and without doing injury to themselves, there seems to be no reason, religious, physical, or moral, why they should not take advantage of it, and they will probably be healthier, and happier, and less obsessed with morbid desires than they would otherwise be.

How this can best be achieved is the problem of the doctor, and not primarily of the moralist. The argument that Nature must not be interfered with seems to have no basis at all, unless we are to condemn the man who eats an egg, or puts up an umbrella in the rain, or segregates the sexes in a lunatic asylum. Nature wastes the

physical elements of human life in so extravagant a degree that we cannot suppose that we are justified in attaching any special sanctity to the elements of physical life prior to their becoming individualized into a human embryo. Nor does it seem to be wrong to separate in some degree the natural pleasure of sex from its normal results in reproduction. A person who habitually eats and drinks without working is disgusting; but the person who enjoys food even when no immediate efforts are contemplated is not to be blamed. But the wise person will always remember that sexual passion ought to be only a stage in life, more and more subordinated to the love which generally depends upon it for a part of its expression, but which is intended to survive, and to strengthen, and become dominant, as sexual desire weakens and disappears. The artificial effort to prolong sexuality for fear of losing the pleasures of life is a sign of mental and aesthetic degeneracy.

Religion has always this further to say, that we may all be called to abandon sex entirely for higher ends, and in doing this, when we are called to do it, we shall not lose any real values in life. If we cut off the arm, or pluck out the eye for an adequate motive, we increase, we do not decrease, the value and enjoyment of life; for Love, which can use

sex-passion, does not depend upon it ; it can throw it aside or outgrow it, and yet go on from one victory to another, and gain strength and delicacy of expression, and assurance of permanence and validity, as the body weakens and decays.

The problems of sex are immensely complicated in our own day by the artificial life which so large a proportion of us have to live. It is not normal or natural for half the marriageable men to be killed or maimed by war ; it is not natural for people to have to fight for empty houses. In our unnatural world many women can never hope to marry or to have children. Their difficulties and sorrows are quite as great as those of men who have lost arms or legs or eyes, and they are all the harder to bear because they are not spoken of, and, as a rule, gain no sympathy.

Mohammed solved their problem by allowing polygamy. At a time when women could not live an independent life and needed protection from some man or other, and when slavery was the only other possible alternative, polygamy may have been the best solution of the difficulty of giving expression to the maternal instinct—far better than the various degrees of prostitution or domestic slavery which have too often been the attempted solution in Christian countries. But for several women to

share a husband can never be an ideal situation, and the church has rightly refused to call such a relationship a Christian marriage. In our day, women can, in a professional or artistic life, gain much of the happiness which normal marriage would otherwise aim at supplying, but we cannot blind our eyes to the fact that they carry, as the maimed man carries, a very heavy burden of opportunities and capacities doomed, so far as this life goes, to remain largely unfulfilled; and the Christian community, which rightly, as we believe, condemns polygamy, ought to have for these silent victims of war the deepest sympathy, and to offer to them all the help and respect that the maimed man so readily commands.

Yet we must remember that in every age those who place Love first—love of ideals, love which will not tolerate anything but the highest—have constantly had to cut off the arm and pluck out the eye; to be maimed at the extremity, so as to be sound at the centre of the being, and those who to-day would ask us to acquiesce in easy solutions of these poignant troubles must remember that the easy solution only satisfies those who are content not to scale the heights. To the woman who feels that any man is better than no man, many simple and easy solutions of her troubles are open. Let us not condemn

her. But such a view of life is not possible to anyone who is more finely attuned to noble ideals of life, and for her the solution is not easy. Life never has been easy to those who see the Kingdom of Heaven. The path always has been, and always will be, narrow, and few will find it, but those who try to walk along it do have their reward. For passion is not love. Love without passion may be hard, but it is possible, and, as it grows, passion in its material expression may lose its attractiveness, and a passion for God may come and take its place and love may find itself after all unmaimed. "As for me, I will behold Thy presence in righteousness, and when I wake up after Thy likeness I shall be satisfied with it."

X

RELIGION AND POLITICS

SHOULD the man who wishes to serve God have anything to do with politics? If we realize that "politics" means the science which teaches men how to live nobly and honourably in communities, the answer must inevitably be that religion is intimately concerned with politics. Politics may, in this or that country, have become a rather disreputable wrangle of covetous and obscene place-hunters, who for purposes of gain try to exploit the public; but this is not politics, but a diseased growth which is a parasite upon politics. This parasitical growth of professional place-hunting is one to which politics is particularly prone, and especially so whenever religious men and women refuse to interest themselves in political life, and, wrapping their cloaks of virtue round them, withdraw themselves into care for the individual life alone, and grow their cabbages in decent seclusion.

Let us consider what are the excuses offered by the " religious " man for not allowing his religion to interfere with his politics.

The first reason which would probably be given is that religion has to do with the world of *spiritual* values, and is not concerned with the arrangements of this world. To this objection we must answer that however spiritual our religious life is, it has to rest for its present expression upon a material basis. To express itself here in this world, the spirit must express itself through human relationships. Fields must be cultivated, houses must be built, animals, or at least vegetables and fruits, must be cultivated for food and clothing, and all these activities involve some arrangement for the machinery of living, however simple, even if it is only the ownership of coats or spades or ploughs or living-sheds, and about these ownership problems there is a more, and there is a less, Christian arrangement. If one tyrannical man seizes all the cultivable fields in a valley and refuses to share their produce, or demands excessive terms for their produce, and so the people of that valley starve, a political problem arises over which religion *is* concerned. Such a man cannot be received into the religious community and fellowship unless he repents, and in some way or other disgorges his ill-gotten gains. If,

again, there is a limited amount of wood on an island, and one man seizes it and refuses to others the fuel, or the building material, or the spade handles which are necessary for life, or will not supply them except at exorbitant cost, a political and also a religious problem arises. Or it may be the majority who oppress the minority and refuse them reasonable freedom of thought and action. This is no less a tyranny, and is a problem of politics in which religion is involved. Robbery does not cease to be robbery when a thousand men rob one man of the means of his legitimate living.

These are very simple types of political problems to which religion must make its contribution. A religious community cannot refuse to " bind " and to " loose," that is, to condemn or acquit, when such conduct is destroying the physical basis upon which life, so far as this world is concerned, is alone possible.

It must also be remembered that the man of religion must also be a man of business. He must have some means of support, a trade and calling of some kind. If he is what we politely call a man of " private means," or in more precise and plain words, a money-lender, he must satisfy himself that money-lending is a Christian way of living,

and if so, with what limitations and provisos.[1] If he has an ordinary trade, if he is a butcher, or a baker, or a gamekeeper, or a publican, or a company-promoter, or (like the clergy) a paid agitator, in each case he finds himself involved in political problems, which are also religious problems. Even if he refuse to own any material possessions at all, and embraces a vow of poverty, and becomes a monk, still the community of which he is a part is a capitalist and an owner. If he makes liqueurs, which, curiously enough, seems to be a specially attractive calling to monks, conspicuous moral problems at once crop up, which also involve political considerations.

And the Christian is not only a trader: he is a nationalist—a member of a nation, and must decide upon what terms his nation ought to be allowed to trade with other nations, and they with his. No one who is familiar with the extraordinarily difficult and complicated problems which concern the

[1] It has always seemed to me that much the most far-reaching and revolutionary change made by the Church at the Reformation era—far more significant than those concerned with popes and sacraments and images—was the decision that the taking of interest, hitherto considered immoral, was within bounds permissible to the Christian. We still have not decided what those bounds are.

relations of nations differing in colour and civilization could possibly feel that religion has no concern with questions of international politics.

This fact, that the religious man is always, or ought to be always, a man of business, means that his religion can never be a merely private concern. If St. Simon Stylites had lived now, and spent his life on a pillar in order to be free from the entanglements of political life, we may be sure that someone would have charged him ground-rent for it, and thus a political problem would have been raised; and if he had refused to charge fees for his intercessions, some enterprising warehouse of religious trinkets would have made a good business out of admitting the devout into his neighbourhood. So questions of politics would arise even for St. Simon. We can indeed refuse to listen to the call of politics, but these problems will surround us all the same, and will demand some kind of solution. If we refuse to dirty our hands with them, someone else's hands will have to be dirty instead.

It may be answered that it is true that questions of equitable distribution and association do in fact always arise between men, and that religion will have advice to offer, and will even be compelled to formulate rules of conduct, but that religion cannot be concerned with any form of coercion,

and that all political measures involve coercion. Very often when projects of religious reunion are to the fore, we are told that Christians cannot, it is true, agree about public prayers, or sacraments, or the titles and functions of church officials, or even about moral problems, such as divorce, or birth control, or war, but they can all join over social work. It is often noticeable that the work in which they feel they can all join is the work of prosecuting, fining or imprisoning, or otherwise coercing some one or other. It may be publicans, it may be brothel owners, it may be bookmakers, it may be Sunday vendors of goods, but the ground of reunion is to harry and coerce someone whose way of getting a living we deplore. Now, it may very rightly be objected that coercion and violence are not the characteristically Christian ways of dealing with immoral action, and it is to be regretted that Christian communities who find they cannot unite with one another on doctrinal issues do so often feel that the coercion of some unpopular, and perhaps really immoral, trade is the highest form of co-operation which is available to them. Coercion, whether applied by physical violence or extreme mental and social pressure, is not a form of persuasion which a Christian can regard as finally satisfactory or legitimate. The appeal which is characteristically

Christian is the appeal to conscience, and the specifically Christian way of securing uniformity of action is by the change of opinion which comes through moral and intellectual conviction.

This is a difference in outlook and in practice which may seem to differentiate broadly the work of the Church from that of the State. No doubt the State has to contemplate habitually the coercion of those who infringe its rules. In promulgating its decisions and orders it has to affix a penalty for breach of its decrees. The State has to find, not the ideal way of life, but a way of life that approximates as nearly as possible to the ideal which will appeal to the average citizen, and be accepted without bloodshed. Its decrees are necessarily compromises, and they are enforced by coercion of the citizen who refuses to abide by this compromise. The Church, on the other hand, is doubtless concerned rather with ideals. It puts an ideal, an even impossible, standard before its members, and bids them get as near to it as they can, with God's assistance, and it does not punish or coerce those who fail. It treats men as saints and bids them act as saints. It lays down ideal lines of action as to lending, divorce, war, and tells us that we must live up to these ideals. But it does not break the bruised reed or quench the smoking

flax. It does not prosecute or imprison those who fail to live up to the ideal. At most, it excommunicates, that is, it dissociates from its fellowship, those who make no attempt to live up to these standards.

Yet here again the Church cannot altogether escape from the political outlook. We should probably all feel that the Christian should use physical violence towards a would-be murderer, if he were himself an onlooker, and no other way of preventing a murder appeared to be available. Probably we should approve of the prosecution conducted by a Christian of someone who time after time refused deliberately to pay debts which he could well afford to pay, and we should feel that some form of violent coercion was needed in the interests of the offender and of the community alike. The habitual brawler in church must, we feel, be removed, if necessary by violence. The tenant of church lands must be compelled to pay his rent if he is able, and if it is a just rent.

Furthermore, the Church member cannot, we should all feel, ignore the fact that he is a member of the State, a citizen. As a citizen, he takes a measure of responsibility for political action. He may see that any purely political action falls far short of the Christian ideal, but there are degrees of

approximation to the ideal, and he may be forced to decide which of two or three parties in the State, or which of two or three courses of action, is, on the whole, nearest to the Christian ideal of procedure; and so he must become a politician. Very often those churchmen who most bitterly inveigh against Christians becoming entangled in politics are found to be the most bitter in denunciation of some party or cause, perhaps of Socialism, or the super-tax, or the education of the poor out of public funds. We are, in fact, forced to inculcate or resist political measures and courses of action so long as we continue to be citizens at all, and so long as we take advantage of streets and sewers, of posts and railways and telephones.

We must remember always that the crude distinction between a State relying on coercion and a Church relying on moral suasion, a State existing by compromises and a Church existing by ideals, is not wholly true in fact. A State which depended upon coercion, and which did not seek to justify its measures by an appeal to the conscience, could not long exist; a Church which refused all compromises and all coercion could not probably long survive. In fact, no church has yet experimented in such a procedure.

The Christian need not necessarily be interested

in what is more generally termed politics—in the struggles of factions for control of the machinery of the State ; but in the application of the principles of religion to buying and selling, to housing, to education, to the care of the sick, in all of which questions of money, of administration, of " business " are concerned, he must, if he is a religious man, contribute his share of experience and wisdom to the State of which he is a citizen.

" The self-centred view of religion which leads a man to shut himself up in the narrow circle of his home, and to leave the sordid affairs of the outside world to coarser and less scrupulous natures, is largely responsible for the evils we have in our minds when we contemptuously refer to ' mere politics,' whether national or municipal, and it will be the same in industry. It is comparatively easy, and not particularly meritorious, to keep oneself ' unspotted from the world,' if one shuns it. The more attractive course for the courageous is to take one's fair share in the necessary work of human society, where prizes are to be gained ' not without dust and heat,' as Milton says." [1]

We need, perhaps, fewer people of " private means," and far more people of " public means," men who know how to keep public life sweet and

[1] *Sermons of an Economist*, Sir W. Ashley.

wholesome and vigorous; and to provide these is surely one of the main objects of religion.

Yet it remains true that the Church does mainly live by the appeal to the conscience, and by living the life of God; only at this level will any union of Christians ever be attained, and only by living this kind of life is a church justified in existing at all. The world has no use for a political society, living by political compromises and only differentiated from a State by being ruled by the clergy. There is a very real distinction between Church and State, and the Church most helps the State when it is least like the State in its procedure and its maxims.

Yet every Christian must also be a citizen, and must have the outlook of the citizen, and must take his part in affairs of State, and his churchmanship must be of such a kind that it fits him for being a good and intelligent citizen, and preparing for the time when the throne and the temple will both alike be unneeded, because we shall live in the power of the ideal, and "the Lamb will be the temple."

The upshot of all this is that the man who wants to be religious cannot avoid being a citizen, and it is his duty to be an intelligent and an active citizen. If he lives in a democracy, he must reflect that a democracy is only possible where all the citizens are taking pains to understand the machinery as well

as the ideals of their political and communal life, and to take a fair share of the burden of administering the laws. A real religion makes a man an intelligent and active citizen.

It is true that there is little about these duties in the New Testament, because in those days there were no political duties but passive obedience to the only possible form of government in a largely illiterate state, that is, a despotism. But in our country, not to be an intelligent and " practising " citizen is to be an ungodly man. To live apart, to sit by oneself, to despise public action, is to reject the means by which God is calling us into fellowship with Him through fellowship with one another. As we " eat condemnation " to ourselves by not discerning the Lord's Body in the eucharistic meal, so we incur a like condemnation by not discerning the Lord's Body in the State, in which also, as in the Sacraments, God makes manifest His Presence to those who seek it, and makes His tabernacle among men. To live out of fellowship with our fellow-citizens is to live out of fellowship with God.

XI

SELF-CULTURE AND SELF-SACRIFICE

THE two ideals of self-culture and self-sacrifice have often been held up before people as alternative goals of life. "Either," people say, "you must devote your life to cultivating your gifts, to realizing yourself, or you must try to kill out your likes and dislikes, your passions and hatreds, and devote yourself to a life of sacrifice." The one has often been called the pagan ideal, the other the Christian. But this opposition of self-realization and self-immolation is not a true one. They are not alternative, but complementary ideals of life. You cannot in truth realize yourself without sacrifice, you cannot offer yourself as a sacrifice unless you have a real self to offer; you cannot love your neighbour as yourself, unless you love yourself.

Religion has too often been identified with the killing off of all that is really valuable in life, in order that a devastated and sterilized self might be offered as a gift to a God jealous of any life outside His own.

In contrast to this ideal of religion, paganism has been pictured as a life of elaborate self-culture in which sacrifice and austerity have no part. The religious pagan is imagined as pursuing every delightful avenue of life, devoting himself to every pleasure of the mind and the body, and abjuring every self-limitation or austerity as an irreligious act.

The Christian, on the other hand, has often revelled in what is unnatural and decadent and *macabre*, and this attitude of life has got to be looked upon as characteristic of religion.

Thus ill-health has been welcomed as an aid to religion ; parents have been comforted for the life-long sickness or premature death of their children by the contemplation of the great danger to true religion which abounding health and strength or prolonged life would probably bring. People in doubt as to which of two courses in life they were to pursue, have been advised to choose the more disagreeable of the two as being probably the wiser one for promoting true life of the soul. Life itself has been regarded as so dangerous an experiment that we were lucky if we escaped its dangers by death. The coffin was the safest place for the religious man, the next safest " the bed of sickness " —a disgusting phrase which has done much to

alienate people from religion. Learning was dangerous, for it might minister to pride ; beauty was dangerous, for it might incite to lust ; strength was dangerous, for it might engender self-sufficiency.

Those who believed these things forgot that ignorance is often the mother of fanaticism and cruelty, ugliness the mother of despair, weakness the mother of cowardice. Our Lord did not teach that one eye or one hand was better than two, but that one hand was better than two *offending* hands, one eye better than two *undisciplined* eyes.

We claim, then, that self-cultivation is a real part of religion, and in order of time it comes before self-sacrifice. The primary duty that is before all of us is to make the most of ourselves ; if we have five talents to gain other five, if two, to gain other two. The deadly sin is to neglect the opportunities of life, to leave uncultivated the talents we possess, to hide the talent in a napkin for fear it may be lost altogether. The teaching of the parable of the talents is that we are not to be afraid of Life. Living entails risks. A dead man, it is true, can't get drunk ; a sick man won't be an adulterer ; a blind man won't read obscene literature. Nevertheless, it is better to live than to be dead, and to live thoroughly ; to be every bit alive. So the religious man will seek to discover his real self and to cultivate

it for all he is worth. The monk who painted missals for the love of beauty and was then tempted by the devil, first to paint for the admiration of others, and then to give up his painting because it had led him into the sin of pride, turned on the devil and said: "I did not begin this for you, and I will not give it up for you," and went on with his painting, only trying to do it better than ever before. This is a parable of Life. Don't let us fear learning or beauty or strength; they may indeed be opportunities for sin (as going to church, or singing a solo at Mass, or being a bishop, may be an opportunity for sin), but *not* to have them may be a still greater opportunity for sin, and beauty and learning and strength are gifts of God, and not to reverence them and seek for them is to blaspheme God.

Our primary duty then is self-cultivation. But if we seek to do this with all our strength, there will come into our life austerity and self-limitation. Limitation is a necessity to true art. The true artist quickly has to learn what to discard from his picture or his newspaper article, as well as what to put in. And what he discards may be in itself quite good, but to discard it is a necessity for that precision of utterance which he desires. He "plucks out an eye or cuts off a hand" in his work for the sake of more absolute rightness of expression.

And the true artist in right living, the man who desires above all things to live justly and honourably, must bring limitation, and the austerity which limitation involves, into his way of living. He does not do this because to live poorly is unpleasant, and because unpleasant therefore religious; he does it because there is no other way of getting that most profound pleasure which comes through clean and perfect achievement. So the true saint, being indeed a true artist in living, may possibly cut out marriage, or the possession of property beyond the barest necessities of life, from his life, because only so can he express himself with that sureness and absolute simplicity of expression which alone gives the artist joy. He rejects many true gifts of life because he wants to hold and possess the one gift; he sells all that he has, including much that is good, to buy that one pearl.

So it is that the very search for perfect self-culture will demand self-sacrifice for its fulfilment. And this self-sacrifice, which is undertaken for a great positive end, the enrichment of life, the possession of the true riches, is not a blighting or narrowing experience. It is not like the asceticism which is the expression of the fear of life, the fear of experiencing, the flight back to the womb of life from fear of the new birth. This kind of

asceticism which comes of fear—"I knew thee that thou wert an austere man, reaping where thou hast not sowed, therefore I hid my talent in a napkin"—this belief that to avoid experience of all kinds is the only way of avoiding sin, this is the very opposite from the true religious self-sacrifice which comes from the desire to gain and hold fast the best in life.

Religion is not the science of living comfortably in the world. Religion is not given us to teach us how to avoid being ill, being poor, being unsuccessful. In the eighteenth century a book was published with the title *Religion for a Gentleman*. It was to show how religion could be so presented as to avoid vexing the susceptibilities of the ordinary comfortable citizen. It was to make no disquieting demands upon the time or the purse or the prejudices of the ordinary average well-conducted gentleman. The mother of William Goodwin wrote to him to say that she had found a young woman admirably fitted to make him a good wife, and, among her other qualities, she was said to have "just as much religion as my William likes." Religion is very often presented to the world in this way. "Be religious," people say. "It will improve your health, it will help you to digest your meals, it will keep you from gross vices, it will

give you an assured, if a modest, position in society, it will guard you from fanaticism and superstition, and (always supposing there to be another world) it will give you a happy entrance into it when the time comes, which we all hope is very far distant, for your contemplating that melancholy change."

Religion of this kind has been well compared to those vaccines prepared from the dead bodies of germs which act as a prophylactic against every attack by the living and deadly germ. Inoculation by this dead religion of respectability makes those who have accepted it immune to the ravages of the spirit, that word which is as a two-edged sword cutting to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, that spirit which drives men into the wilderness to be among the wild beasts and to be tempted by the devil.

Let us not then ask for a religion which will set us at our ease. No true religion will ever do that. Christianity certainly will not deal thus with us. Christ teaches us that to live in this world is a task of great difficulty, because this world is not the true home of the spirit. It is a place in which the spirit can live and grow, but only by conflict, and with difficulty, by continually asserting the supremacy of the spirit over matter, and maintaining that supremacy by unwearied conflict.

The experienced traveller by sea never makes the mistake of supposing that the ship is his home. He makes himself, indeed, as comfortable as he can, he adjusts his demands with skill to the possibilities of the situation in which he finds himself, and is gay and contented with his lot ; but he never lets himself be deluded into thinking that the restricted interests and the transient loves of the voyage are his true concern. He keeps his outlook well beyond the petty concerns in which he gladly takes his part. But all the time he is receiving messages from his true home, and making plans for his real life. So religion is not intended to adapt us for a permanent and contented residence here, but for the life of the spirit which can only be lived here under difficulties, and with a continuous reference to the wider interests of that Eternal life, in which alone the spirit can find a permanent home.

There is thus a continuous austerity, a withholding of himself from full concourse with the world, about the true Christian. His immediate neighbours and relations are always reminding him that they are his mother and brothers and sisters, and that he belongs to this or that country and town and class and church, and he is continually moved to pass by them and say : " These, who hear the same voice

of God, are my true brothers; this invisible Jerusalem is my true mother; this society of the saints my true home; this unleavened bread of sincerity and truth is my real food." And this he does, not because he is conceited and self-conscious and superior. He knows that he is no better than others, but he is irresistibly impelled to seek the home of his soul, and to reject the lure of false resting-places.

And this experience of being a pilgrim and a stranger is not peculiar to the man of religion; he shares it with the true artist who cannot be at home in some fashionable and conventional vogue; with the true statesman who cannot share the small hopes and base rewards of his party associates, who cannot share in the pleasure which others find in Garters and Thistles and O.B.E.'s, and is perpetually seeking for ends whose final achievement is not clearly discernible in this world at all. And yet the man who lives thus, somewhat withheld from the world, is the very man the world wants, and tries so hard to claim for its own. By possessing nothing he possesses all things. He who has left everything for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake is now seen to possess all those things which he was willing to give up.

It is this failure to see the beauty of all real

simplicity, the simplicity of rejecting all that is not relevant to the work in hand, which makes the lives of so many good people so commonplace and ineffective. People say, "This is demanded of me; my position in life requires me to do this, to possess that." So we see people clinging to the furniture of their parents, and chained to a house which the furniture demands, but which is a prison to them, and they cry out that they are poor, and oppressed with cares and anxieties, but they dare not offend their furniture, which is their god. That they must keep at all costs. People will often have two or three hundred articles on one wall, most of which are both ugly and useless, and they daren't get rid of them, and so their lives are fettered and ineffective. Or they feel obliged to keep up with certain causes or friends with whom they have no common interest, but with whom they feel "it is expected" that they should be friends, or they feel tied to a church which is no help to them, but they feel "it is expected that they should set an example."

These people, like the madman in the gospel, have their dwelling among the tombs, and like him they are often "exceeding fierce," because they know in reality that they are living foolishly and ineffectively, but they cannot bear to make the change,

or to have the necessity of change pointed out to them.

They cannot bear to hear Christ's message, "Let the dead bury their own dead." They are afraid that if they were parted from their dead friends, and dead furniture, and dead religion, that they would be left without friends and without a god.

It is not to everyone that the call comes: "Go and sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven." To the rich young man that advice was given because he was so extraordinarily good that he would always have found all that he needed with or without money. The real saint always has all he needs. But in some measure this asceticism comes as a condition of all real beauty and effectiveness in life, and a religion which does not strike that note must always be suspect.

A religious life has in it both these elements, acceptance and rejection; it must be a life of aggression and withdrawal. It must be continually attacking the problem of the world, living in close fellowship with the world, sharing its interests and believing in its future, and yet at the same time withdrawing, criticizing, withholding full acquiescence.

The religious man is in the world and yet apart. Times of withdrawal, of seclusion, are absolutely essential to religion. So greatly are they needed that, to those who will not have them, the " nursing home " becomes the substitute, the very expensive and very ineffective substitute, for the soul's insistent demand for a withdrawal to its true home. Sunday is the English substitute for the retreat. At its best it was a very wonderful institution, full of life and peace ; it ensured some time for self-criticism and seclusion ; and Sunday is still a time which could be made far more useful than it is. It might be shared only by those who are our real fellow-workers ; it might be secluded from the picture-papers which, generally speaking, are the enemy of all religious ideals ; it might be given to books and occupations which keep us in touch with our real home, as well as to the formal worship of God.

Thus the true lover of beauty will pass through this terrestrial world, loving it, " as a wise workman recognizes tools in a master's workshop, loving what they make," and yet somewhat withdrawn, refusing much which others take too greedily, so that being poor to the world, he may be rich towards God, who is Himself our Life and our Reward.

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